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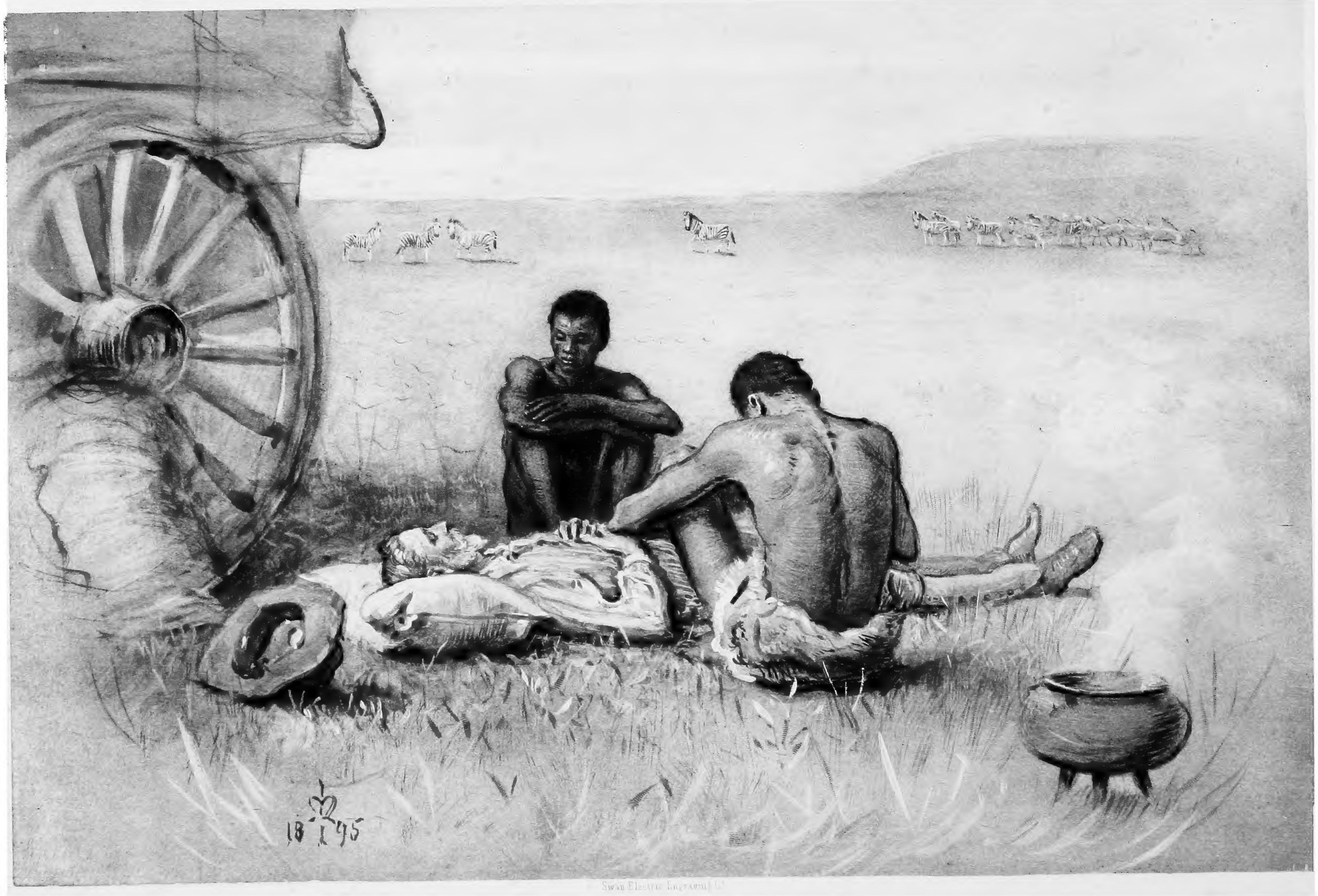
A BREATH FROM THE VELDT



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"The last trek"
by
The late Sir J. E. Millais, P.R.A.

A Breath from the Veldt

BY

JOHN GUILLE MILLAIS, F.Z.S., etc.

AUTHOR OF 'GAME BIRDS AND SHOOTING SKETCHES,' 'BRITISH DEER AND THEIR HORNS,' ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR
AND FRONTISPIECE BY
THE LATE SIR J. E. MILLAIS, BART., P.R.A.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

LONDON
HENRY SOTHERAN AND CO.
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1899

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

SINCE the publication of the First Edition of *A Breath from the Veldt*, South Africa has undergone many changes. Twice have the savage hordes of the Matabele and Mashunas fought against the incoming pioneers, and now we are involved in war with the Boers, a contest which has been inevitable ever since the disastrous peace of 1881.

The outcome of this will, we trust, herald in the dawn of another peace that shall be an abiding one.

I have found it necessary to issue the Second Edition in a more handy shape, and though the size of the volume has been reduced the illustrations will be found in their original form.

J. G. MILLAIS.

MELWOOD, HORSHAM, 1899

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A Breath from the Veldt

CHAPTER I

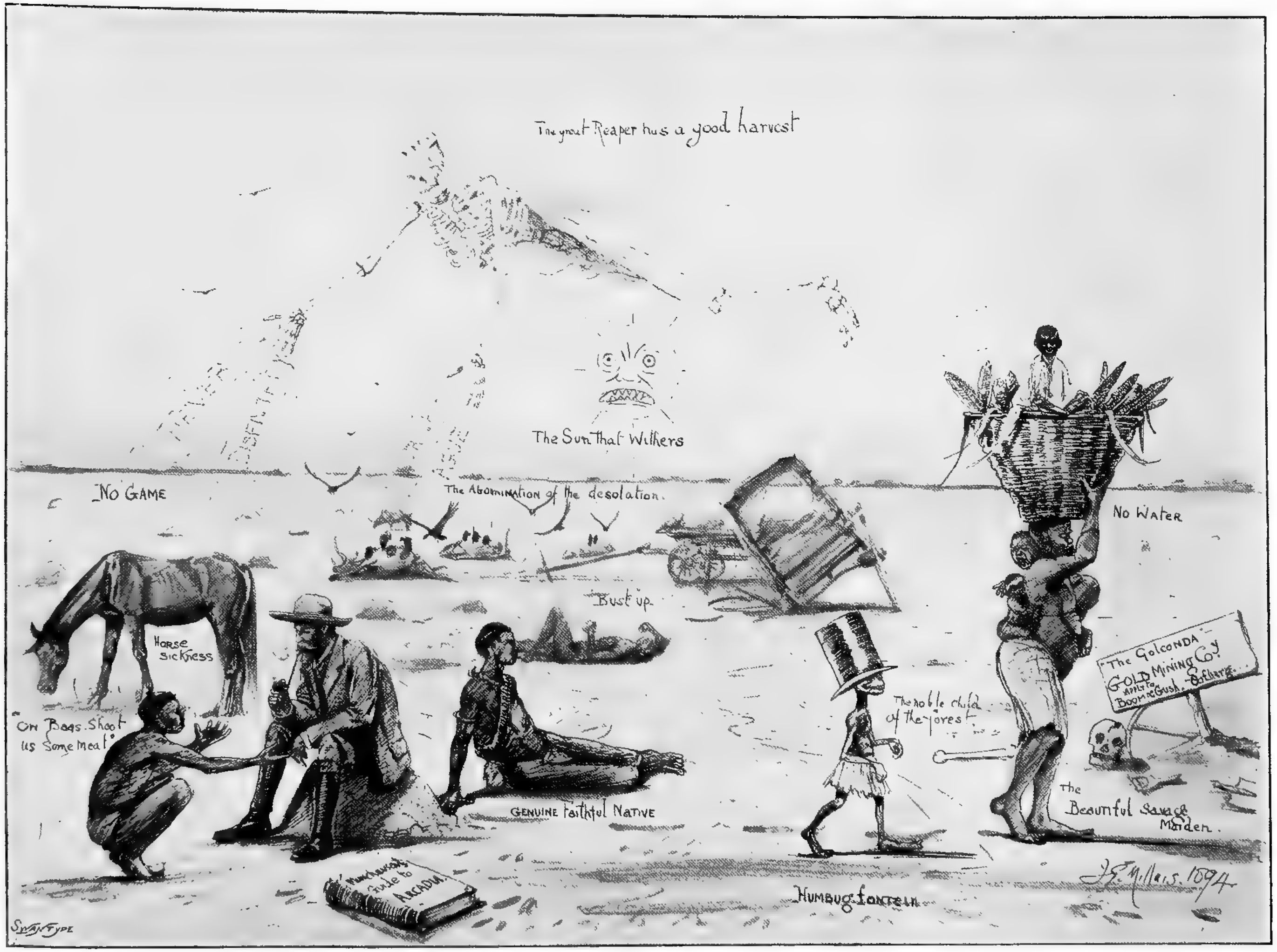
"Of the making of books there is no end"—especially of books on South Africa. What right have I then—a man with no pretension to literary craftsmanship—to foist on the public another volume on a subject of which everybody knows, or thinks he knows, everything worth knowing? "Another book on South Africa! Bless my life, have not we had enough of it already—of its Boers and buffaloes, its gold and diamonds; of trekking and camping-out, and all the rest of it?" I fancy I hear some such exclamation from a fastidious critic as soon as this modest venture of mine is submitted to his notice. Here it is, however, a candidate for the favour of the great B. P.; and as nobody else is likely to apologise for its appearance or blow a trumpet in advance, I must do it myself, leaving my readers to imagine the "blush unseen" with which I speak of my own work.

It is hard to judge art from too severe a standpoint when the production of drawings has to be undertaken under unfavourable circumstances. Neither has it been my good fortune to have any art education whatsoever, or who knows that I might not have blossomed into a great artist, like Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, for instance? Still, in the wild solitudes where for nearly a year it was my privilege to wander, I found a pencil no small help to my notes, and I hope my readers will not be altogether disappointed with the result. My aim, I may say at once, has been to avoid as far as may be the ground covered by other and abler writers, and to treat only of what has come under my own observation as a sportsman and a naturalist.

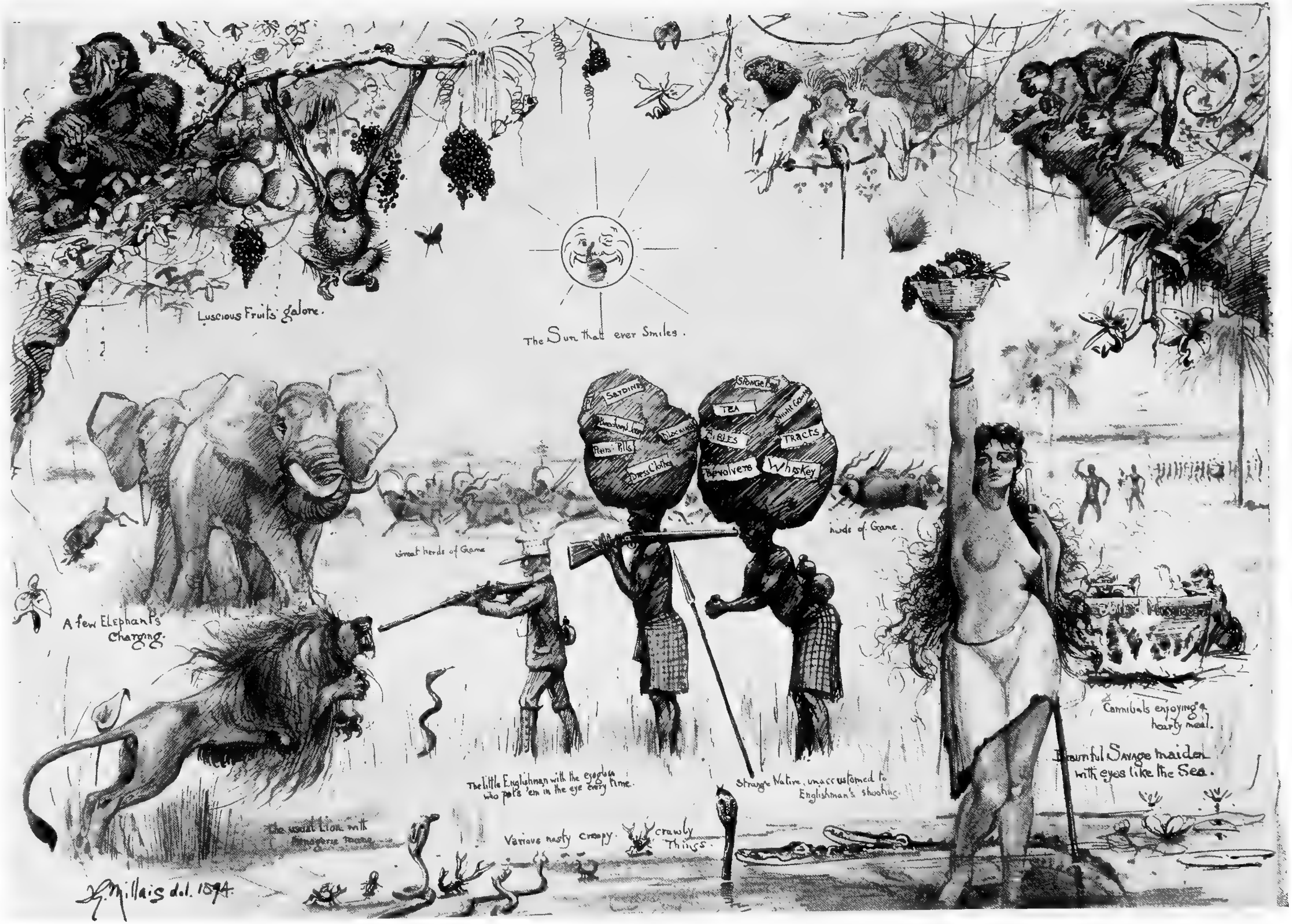
In the earlier chapters are some details of bird and beast that the general reader may be glad to skip; but apart from these he may, I hope, find something to interest and perchance amuse him in the wild life of the forest and the desert as presented here from notes made on the spot.

And now to my tale. Some two years ago, having just finished Mr. Selous' latest and most admirable book, I started for South Africa with the settled conviction that there was nothing more to be said on the subject. And yet I had not been in Cape Town six hours before I found myself sitting down on the beach and making sketches of the funny little ways of a lot of cormorants as they disported themselves at my feet in the waters. Then said I to myself, " If they interest me, perhaps they will somebody else," and forthwith I began to make notes of what I saw. The notes grew day by day as other things attracted my attention, and finally I fell a victim to the South African Book disease from which so many of my fellow-countrymen have suffered. Its effect upon some of them is truly wonderful. A man lands, say, about the end of February, when the days are beginning to be cool and pleasant, and he notices with surprise the general lethargy and indolence of the inhabitants. He is himself brisk and active after his voyage ; his brain, wearied perhaps at starting, has received a tonic, and as he walks down Adderly Street he begins to think what a fine fellow he is by comparison with the men he meets. That is the first symptom of the disease. The second is his notebook, in which he jots down at once what is passing in his mind. Before he has been a week in Cape Town the fever is in full swing. He has collected from one source or other sufficient information for a couple of chapters on the Colony and its government, and is full of suggestions for the better ordering of the community. A visit to Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg furnishes him with material for a chapter on big game shooting and the gold mines ; and, coming across a renegade Boer who can speak English, he gathers from him many startling facts about " Onsland " that exist only in the addled brains of road-riders and bar-loafers. The climax of the disease is reached when the sufferer publishes his work (at his own expense) and sticks his friends for a copy, with a handsome portrait of himself as a frontispiece.

The voyage to the Cape is the very calmest and consequently pleasantest that can be taken from our shores, as the conditions of weather are nearly always favourable after the dreaded " Bay " is passed, and every passenger on board has full opportunities for indulging his or her particular form of lazy or healthful recreation. There are the usual sports got up during the cooler portions of the day, and dances and entertainments of various kinds serve to enliven the evenings. The " Castle " line is famous in this respect. To enhance the pleasure


The great Reaper has a good harvest
The Sun that Withers
No Game
The Abomination of the desolation.
No Water
Horse sickness
"Oh Baas. Shoot us some meat"
Bust up.
Genuine faithful Native
The noble child of the forest.
The Golconda Gold Mining Co.y Apply to Boom & Gush. Brokers.
The Beautiful savage Maiden.
Munchausen's Guide to Arcadia
Humbugfontein
J. G. Millais. 1894
Swain Type

SOUTH AFRICA (AS MANY HAVE FOUND IT)


Luscious Fruits galore.
The Sun that ever Smiles.
SARDINES
Pears' Pills
Blacking
Dress Clothes
Sponge Bag
TEA
Night Gowns
BIBLES
TRACTS
Revolvers
Whiskey
A few Elephants Charging.
Great herds of Game
herds of Game.
Cannibals enjoying a hearty meal.
Beautiful Savage maiden with eyes like the Sea.
The little Englishman with the eyeglass who pots 'em in the eye every time.
Strange Native, unaccustomed to Englishman's shooting.
The usual Lion with Menagerie mane
Various nasty creepy crawly Things.
J. G. Millais del. 1894.

SOUTH AFRICA—THE IDEAL

of the voyage Messrs. Donald Currie and Company engage only stewards who are skilled musicians, forming in this way a good band to play every evening on deck. Indeed, everything on their ships is first-class, and a more comfortable craft than the *Norham Castle*, or a more pleasant set of officers and men, I have never come across. The *cuisine*, too, is excellent, notwithstanding its condemnation by Lord Randolph Churchill, whose letters in the *Daily Graphic* met with a response on board ship which his Lordship could hardly have anticipated. On the return voyage of the ship in which he had sailed, the first-class passengers, sympathising with the wounded feelings of the *chef*, for a Frenchman is nothing if not an artist, subscribed amongst themselves nearly £70, and presented this amount as a *douceur* to the Knight of the Kitchen.

In a voyage of three weeks life is abridged into a nutshell. A delicious sense of laziness takes possession of all on board, disposing everybody to be friendly and communicative ; and many a lifelong friendship has its origin in a cruise like this. The permanent results, too, of a voyage to the Cape can hardly be over-estimated. After a few days the fine air and regular hours, and the appetite they engender, work wonders on a toil-worn or weakened frame. *Experto crede !* When I left England last February I was utterly incapacitated from work by sleeplessness following on influenza ; but before the voyage had ended the habit of sleep returned, and on my return voyage in November it generally took two stewards, a bath attendant, several bells, and the sarcastic remarks of my fellow-passengers to arouse me in the morning.

On the morning of the eighteenth day after leaving England the *Norham Castle* was steaming her last few miles in the lovely bay on which Cape Town rests. The glorious African sun was out in all his splendour, lighting up one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. The great bald headland of Table Mountain, flanked on either hand by the barren crags of Lion's Head and Devil's Peak, looms above the mist, seeming quite near to the spectator in the crystalline clearness of the atmosphere. Shaggy woods climb its slopes for over a thousand feet, their mass of form and colour contrasting finely with the bare grandeur of the higher precipices, whilst the town itself, with its low, white walls, nestles at the foot of this superb piece of nature's handiwork. In itself Cape Town is hardly perhaps a thing of beauty ; but with its environments, with the sea in front, and behind it the everlasting hills, it forms the brightest gem in South African scenery. Nature has it all her own way here. Round the majestic monument of Table Mountain still soar the eagle, the buzzard, and the white-necked raven ; whilst in the surf, regardless of boats and boatmen, groups of the little green cormorant may be seen any day pursuing their finny prey to the very verge of the beach.[1]

The Bay on a still morning in February is a delightful sight to any lover of nature. Great shoals of fish move in every direction, creating ripples on the opal surface that mark their progress through the water, and after them come the "schools" of porpoises and dolphins as well as the fowls of the air. As one gazes out over the blue expanse, hardly a hundred yards square is seen that is not disturbed by the roll of the porpoises, either pursuing their victims or playing in the morning sun; the graceful, headlong dive of the Cape gannet or booby; the neat header of the little green cormorant, or the splash of some Dominican gull as he descends.

The tameness of all these creatures is something amazing. Being never disturbed by the sound of a gun, they repay their preservers by an exhibition of wild life in all its freedom that adds immensely to the charm of the surrounding scenery. In point of natural beauty South Africa, taken as a whole, is a fraud. Here and there are some redeeming features, such as Cape Town, Randebosch, Durban, the Zoutpansberg Mountains, the wood bush of the Nysna Forest, and the low countries and rivers of Eastern Mashonaland and the Zambesi. But these, be it remembered, are in a country half as big as Europe. To the sightseer it has little more to show than a series of huge wildernesses, either perfectly open or covered with grass and sheepbush, or ornamented with monotonous acacia forests. The traveller, therefore, labours under a considerable disadvantage in viewing the one real gem, Cape Town, on his first arrival in the country. Should he be tempted to think that Cape Town is a sample of what is to follow up country, he will be greatly disappointed, for one scene after

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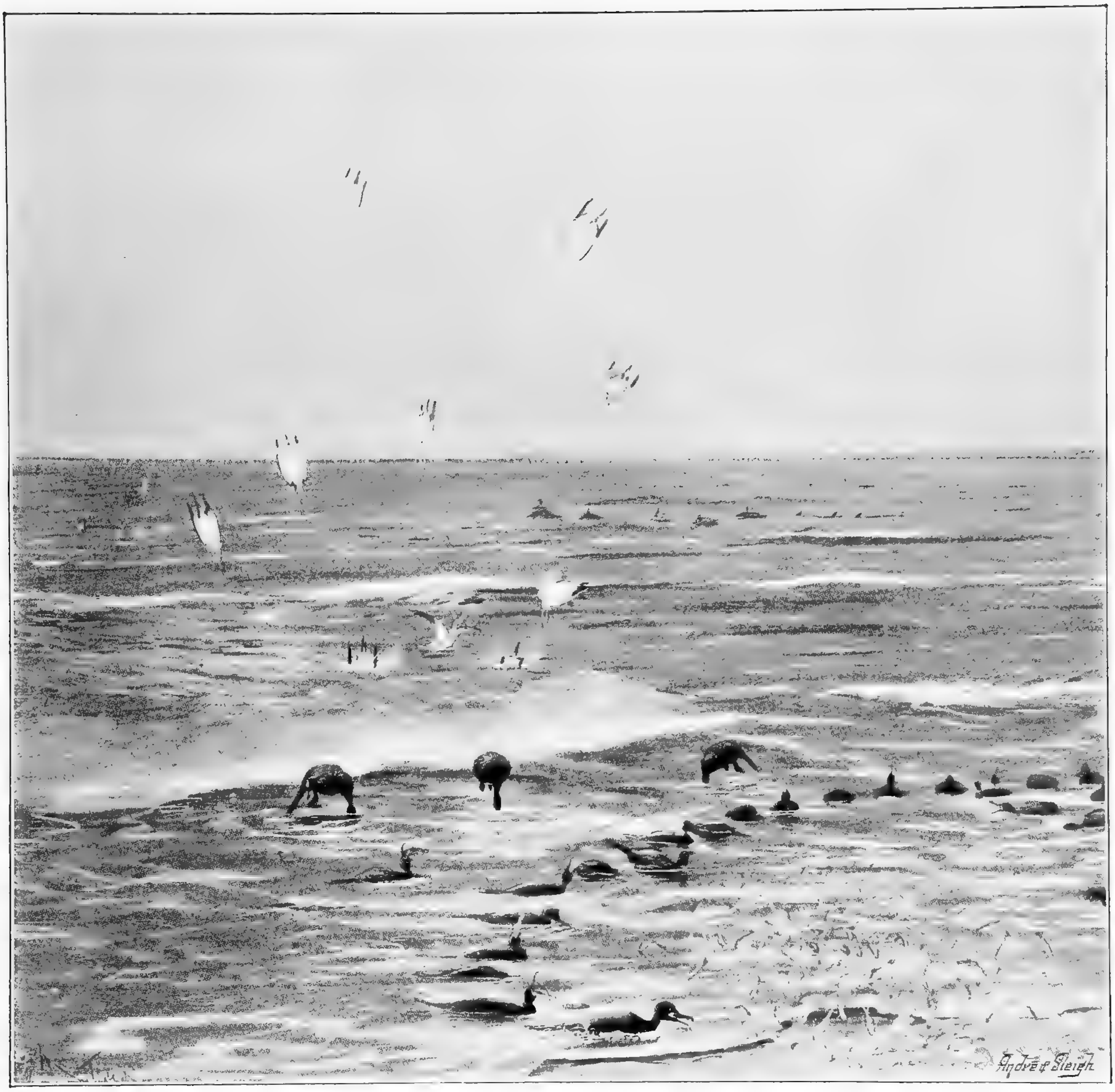
[1] Should the traveller be so disposed, an interesting sight may be witnessed any day by watching these little cormorants fishing. Their more ordinary method is that of singly diving in the shallows, after the manner of all their species. But instinct and an excessive abundance of their natural food has taught these birds that by uniting their forces a full stomach may be obtained with far less trouble than the methods they usually employ. The plan resorted to is as follows; and with the exception of one species of North African pelican, it is one that is not followed by any other sea-bird that I know of:—

The cormorants to the number of ten or twenty form line, each bird being within a couple of feet from its neighbour, and swim along the shore at right angles to the beach, the bird nearest the land being only just able to float. In this manner they advance, constantly inspecting the water beneath by immersing their heads and necks until a shoal of small fish is found. Then the whole line wheels, as it were, at once shorewards, most of the birds diving together in shallows, thus frightening the fish, which escape before them in such quantities that a large number are forced right out of the sea on to the beach itself. These tactics are generally rewarded by a plentiful repast, each bird resting on its breast amidst the stones, and gobbling up the fish as they spring on all sides, attempting to regain their natural element. In the accompanying sketch the reader will see a representation of this interesting spectacle, as well as of the manner in which the Cape booby catches his prey by means of an aerial header.



SHOWING THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LESSER GREEN CORMORANTS SURROUND AND DRIVE ON SHORE A SHOAL OF SMALL FISH

The line of birds is represented in the act of wheeling.

another is equally monotonous and uninteresting. The discomfort he will meet with in the shape of dirt, thirst, bad food, and a sun that withers all it touches, is not easily forgotten by any one who has once experienced it. These remarks, however, are only intended to be taken as a hint by the "travelling gent" who is neither sportsman nor naturalist; for the latter learns in time to care little for such things where Nature carries her own recompense.

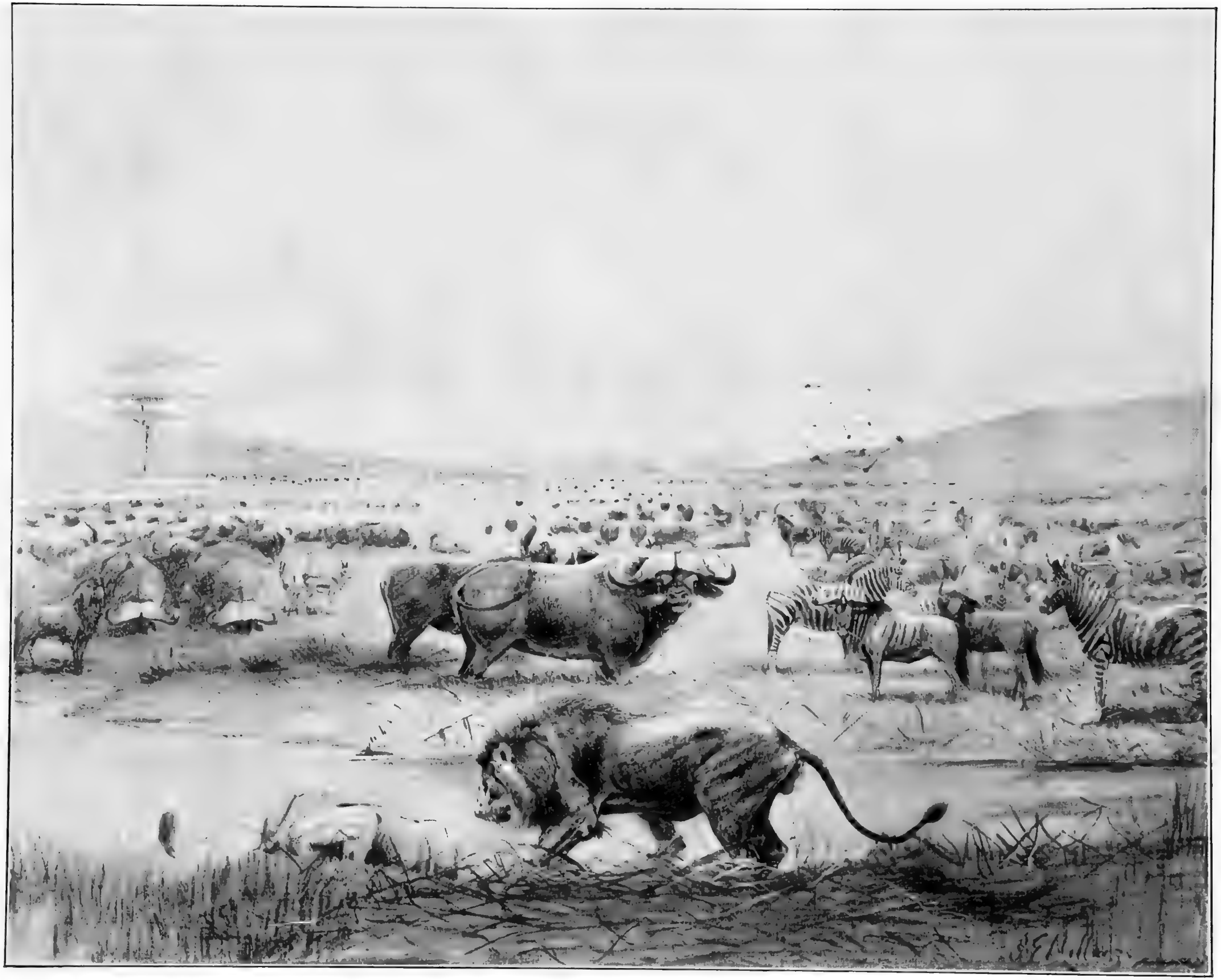
At Cape Town the Botanical Gardens are a dream of beauty and delight, especially to the botanist. Here almost everything that can be grown in a tropical climate flourishes exceedingly. The Museum and Library are also excellent and well-managed institutions. But as these things have already been dealt with by abler pens than mine, I recall them only as points of infinite refreshment on my return from the interior.

The traveller can pass a very pleasant fortnight in Cape Town if he is so inclined. There are delightful drives and rides in the neighbourhood. The Kloof Road, Hout Bay, Kalk Bay, Winberg, and the vineyards of wooded Constantia are each and all charming objects for expeditions; but to see them in perfection they should be visited in early spring (November), when the Arum lilies are coming out, and other wild-flowers in bloom.

Here, too, is the finest deep-sea fishing in the world. The waters of Cape Town Harbour, Simon's Bay, and Kalk Bay simply teem with fish of every size and description, and the sportsman fond of the hand-line can have a real treat by taking a boat for the day in any of these waters, at a cost of about £1. Let him also arm himself with that admirable little handbook, *The Sportsman in South Africa*, and he will find there all the information he needs on this subject.

Judging from my own experience, I should say the climate in February is too hot for the average Britisher. For days together the thermometer ranges from 100° to 104° in the shade, when sweating humanity is glad to keep indoors from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., refreshing itself as far as may be with siestas and cold drinks. In fact, the African summer is not yet over, and so long as it lasts work during those hours is practically suspended. The new-comer, full of life and energy, may be disposed to laugh in his sleeve at the lethargic indifference he cannot fail to notice in all around him; but after a few short weeks under the African sun, he too succumbs to the great fire-god and orders his life accordingly; he takes to himself the early morning hours and the cool of the evening, and presently finds that enough for either business or pleasure.

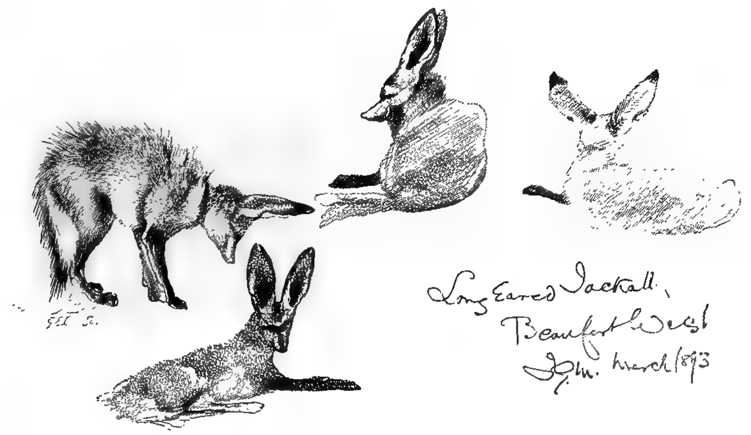
To return to Cape Town. It lacks just one thing to crown the list of its attractions; and in my humble opinion the lack is a very serious one. It has no Zoological Gardens, and yet, with its natural gifts of climate, shelter, soil for grass, and abundance of water, it possesses every advantage that could be desired for that purpose. In former times the Cape was the home of nearly all the finer big game still to be found in the far North, and though the number of these animals is now sadly diminished, living specimens can still be got that would at least repay the cost of capture and keep, while preserving to future generations many interesting creatures now seriously threatened with extinction. A goodly sum would, no doubt, come in from annual subscriptions and gate-money, but far more would probably be gained by the sales of young animals to the zoological societies of other countries; for, under careful nurture in their own land, the captured beasts and birds would naturally increase and multiply as they can hardly be expected to in climates to which they are not accustomed. Communications could be opened up with all the European, American, and Indian zoological societies, and thus specimens of all the rarer African fauna could generally be obtainable at more reasonable prices than they command at present. Take the giraffe, for instance, for a pair of which Dr. Sclater, the secretary to our "Zoo," is at present offering £1500. These beautiful creatures may be caught in the Kalahari desert and conveyed to Cape Town at infinitely less risk than that involved in transporting them to England; for they must be taken very young, and in the first two years of their existence they are extremely delicate. A Dutch hunter, Cornellis Basadanote by name, a man of great experience in catching wild animals, told me some interesting facts about the capture of these animals, of which, in days gone by, he had taken many in the low countries adjoining the Labombo Mountains. Out of every eight he took only one lived to find a market in a South African town. After the privations attendant on its long trek down country the animal is rarely given time to pick up its strength, but is shipped at once for the homeward voyage, during which it generally succumbs, rather, in all probability, through injuries received during its capture and long journey than from a too sudden change of climate. Many of these animals would reach Europe in good condition, if there were some convalescent home where they could recover strength before finally leaving their own country. The giraffe breeds well in captivity, and the climate of the Cape exactly suits it, being mild and equable as its own home in South Africa, either in the Kalahari, Eastern Mashonaland, or in the low countries adjoining Labombo. If a pair of healthy animals could



IN DAYS GONE BY

be obtained from the former region, where they are still numerous, there is not the least doubt that under such favourable conditions as might readily be secured at Cape Town, they would breed regularly when they had reached maturity, and their progeny could be advantageously sold to foreign zoological societies when they had attained sufficient age and condition to enable them to withstand the discomfort of a sea voyage.

The same may be said of the buffalo, the sable antelope, the waterbuck, the roan antelope, the greater koodoo, and the black wildebeest. All these fine beasts are doomed to eventful extinction unless something of this kind be done ; the only other alternative being the formation of a national game preserve, on the lines of Yellowstone Park, in Western America. Here is where our American cousin has shown his foresight and good sense. Let us not therefore be behindhand in foreseeing the inevitable destruction of the truly magnificent fauna—a fauna that no other country possesses in such variety and all-round beauty. Let Mr. Cecil Rhodes do a popular thing, which will receive the unanimous support of all lovers of nature, and cause the British South Africa Company to assign a district for the sole preservation of the wild game.[1] This will in no wise interfere with the advance of civilisation, but will retain for South Africa some of the beauties of creation for which she is justly considered so famous. How easily the animals indigenous to the country can be preserved, and their decrease stopped, can be seen here and there, where



THE LONG-EARED JACKAL

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[1] Since the above was written nearly two years have elapsed, and many changes have been made, showing great progress in South Africa, and I am glad to see that Mr. Rhodes intends to take up this matter and establish an extensive game park in the neighbourhood of Cape Town, whilst Captain Gibbons is also starting a game farm in Mashonaland.

far-sighted farmers, having suitable lands, have adopted such a policy. The bontebucks on the farms of Mr. Van der Byl at Swellendam, the black wildebeests on two farms in the Free State, the blessbucks on the lands adjacent to the Vaal River, and the hippopotami on the lake near Durban are all good instances. The real difficulty is to get the right sort of men to interest themselves in such a project. South Africa is a country where men go to make money, and having attained any degree of affluence they wisely come back to the old country to spend it. Such men, therefore, as Major Frank Johnson, the administrator of Manicaland, are scarce; and he of all others is the most likely man to carry these ideas into effect, and obtain sufficient support. Being a man of considerable influence, as well as a first-class sportsman and naturalist, there is probably no one in South Africa more fitted to set the scheme on its legs.

I had the pleasure of returning to England with him in November 1893, and we had many talks on the subject. He has hunted in the interior with great success during the past eleven years, has influence with the people from whom animals could be obtained, and is, moreover, one of the most energetic and popular men in the country. If he would undertake the work (as I think he would, with a few of the right sort to help him) the thing would be done at once. As to cost, but little outlay would be required to start the concern. Given a small park and building, capable of extension as time goes on, it would be enough to provide, in the first instance, for only two or three specimens of the more rare and interesting animals, and if steps be at once taken to this end, these can be readily obtained from the farmers, traders, and hunters who are constantly moving to and fro in the interior.

After four days at Cape Town I hied on my first stage northwards, to Beaufort West, a charming little village (or town, as it is called) situated in the centre of the Great Karroo, under the shadow of the Nieuveldt Mountains. An altitude of 3000 feet gives it a certain degree of coolness; being favoured also with an atmosphere of marvellous purity, it is rapidly coming into favour as a health resort to sufferers from lung troubles. And speaking from experience, as well as from what I gathered from other visitors there, during a residence of six weeks, I can testify to the wonderful health-giving properties of the place.[1]

Unlike most of the smaller towns in South Africa, Beaufort West has some attractions and amusements of its own. There is a lawn-tennis club, where any stranger is sure of a hospitable reception ; there are lovely gardens, where plenty of shade may be found ; and as to fruit, it is at once excellent and abundant. For the small charge of sixpence you can go into any of the fruit gardens, and in one short hour lay the foundations of a choleraic attack that will take six months to cure. Figs, peaches,[1] pears, and grapes grow in a profusion that laughs to scorn the feeble efforts of man to consume the supply. Acres of grapes, hedges of quinces, and gardens of peaches annually go to rot and waste without a hand to gather them. This is no exaggeration, but a positive fact, though the people on the spot do not care to own it.

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[1] An admirably-managed hotel-sanatorium is kept by Mr. J. Butt, situated about three miles from the town on the side of the mountains.

A CHEETAH CUB

Young man setting forth into the world with a few hundreds in your pocket, don't go to Florida to grow oranges ; there are too many there already. Don't go to California ; the market is alike glutted. Don't go to British Columbia unless you've already been there, or have secured a nice snug berth before you started ; and, above all, don't go to Mashonaland to mine or farm, under the impression that it is a sort of hybrid El Dorado and Arcadia ; but go to Beaufort West, or some other healthy town in the Karroo district, where life, however quiet, is a pleasure, and a small fortune may be made by starting a fruit-canning factory, as you can obtain the material there for next to nothing. While making your pile, however, don't forget to whom you owe this hint. Dear to his memory are those delicious figs of Beaufort West, and he will sample them for you at any time, free of charge.

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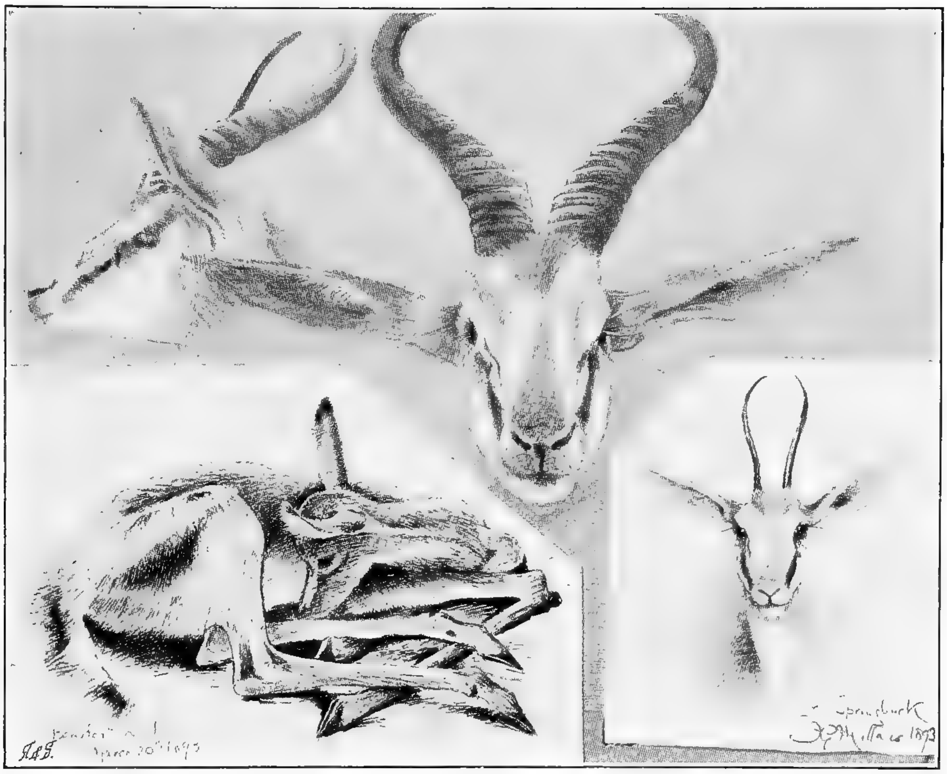
[1] Mr. Peter Flower and I, whilst walking in one of these gardens one day, came upon a peach tree split completely in half by the sheer weight of fruit on its branches. The trunk divided in a fork about six feet from the ground, and had been unable to bear the strain on its lateral branches, which had fallen to the earth.

From the sportsman's point of view, the chief attraction of Beaufort West is the springbuck shooting, and this is in every way excellent. A man who can kill his seven stags in eight shots in Scotland is apt to plume himself on his skill with the rifle ; but let him go South and shoot, or rather shoot at, springbuck for a fortnight, and he will, at any rate, find that his average is not quite so good. He may count himself lucky if, as a new-comer, he can account for one springbuck in forty cartridges ; many who are by no means bad shots are occasionally run into the hundreds for shooting a single animal. And the reason for this is not far to seek. First of all, the springbuck, though longer in the legs, is hardly larger in the body than an ordinary sheep, and as it is not easy to get nearer than 400 yards, he presents to the eye so small a mark as to require not only very accurate shooting but a perfect light. Then, as to distance, a sportsman new to the country is much puzzled in finding that, owing to atmospheric causes, it is not to be judged by the standard to which he is accustomed at home ; and only by experience can he learn to adapt his aim to the altered conditions under which he finds himself. Nevertheless I would strongly recommend this Karroo shooting as the finest training-ground I know, for hand, eye, and brain. Let the sportsman not be disheartened by his failures at first, for all begin like that ; if he can shoot at all, his marksmanship will rapidly improve, and in time he will be able to kill as many bucks as those whom at first he might perhaps have envied. The air of the Karroo is very rarefied, but not nearly so much so as that of the "Rockies" or Cashmere (though I cannot speak of the latter of the two countries from personal experience) and the eye has to become trained to the altered conditions of light.

Although the springbucks of to-day are but a scattered remnant of what they were in days gone by, when they roamed in countless multitudes over the vast plains of South Africa, they are still by far the commonest representatives of the antelope tribe in that country. Much has been done of late years, and is still being done, I am glad to say, to protect them in all parts of the Karroo district, and the result is to be seen in a marked increase in their numbers during the past few seasons. In certain parts of Cape Colony, in the Free State, British Bechuanaland, and the Transvaal, a regular season for shooting is now recognised by law, and the regulation is carefully observed. The true home, however, for this graceful antelope is now to be found in the Kalahari, Damaraland, Ovampoland, and Great Namaqualand. It is from the last-named country that nearly all the beautiful karosses, made from the hides of the animals, come. They are shipped to Cape Town in large quantities from Walfish Bay and the other west coast ports, being shot by the Hottentots, whose womenfolk are singularly skilful in cleaning and sewing the skins. The springbuck (*Gazella euchore*) being nearly a pure gazelle, prefers, like most of its congeners, to roam in large troops over the great open flats. In common with all wild animals that inhabit such regions, it is gifted with extraordinary powers of scent and observation. In places where it is much hunted, it readily learns to distinguish the presence of man, even at distances where the enemy may think himself beyond the possibility of recognition; and when that

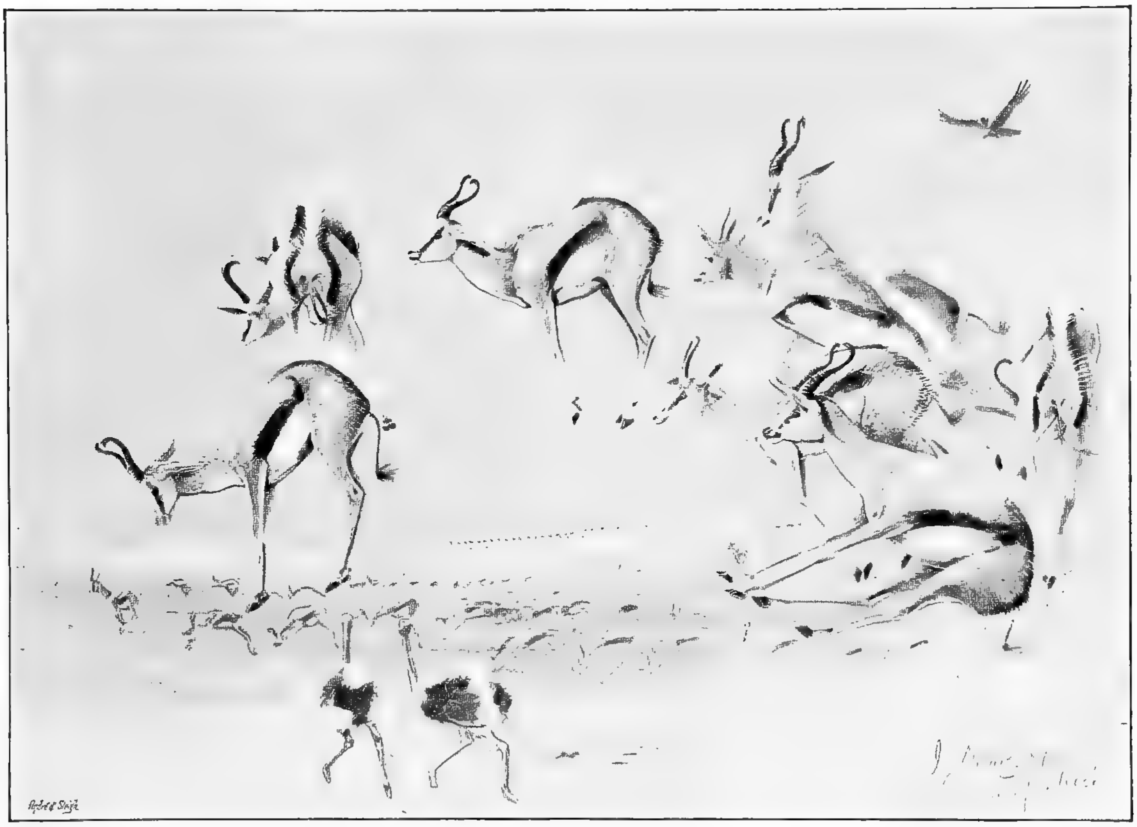


SPRINGBUCK HEADS—IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH happens the herd have probably the best chance of it for the day, if a stalk is in prospect. The animal, however, where not constantly persecuted, soon becomes comparatively tame, though these denizens of the plains will not permit so close an approach as the larger bucks of the forest-clad regions. Mr. Bryden, whose description of the Kalahari and Botletle River country is by far the best and most careful that has yet appeared, says in his charming *Gun and Camera in South Africa* that even when springbuck hardly ever saw the face of man, they could rarely be approached nearer than 200 yards, even under cover of a horse that was made to feed slowly towards a troop.

It is only during the extraordinary migrations, which take place at irregular intervals amongst these bucks and the blessbucks, that anything like indifference to danger is manifested by them. At such times the animals, crowded together, move onward from one ground to another in an irresistible phalanx, devouring on their way every green thing they come across; and nothing seems to divert them from their course. Whilst "trekking" thus, as these periodical changes of ground are called, the Boers fall upon them, and it is their delight to tell of the havoc they play amongst these poor creatures. At such times they can ride up to the van of the herd, and kill, either with shot-gun or rifle, as many as they like. Only the foremost bucks, however, are worth killing, as the herds move in such masses that the whole of the pasturage is devoured by the first comers, those in the rear being left in a wretched condition from want of food.

Most British authors describe the springbuck as the fleetest antelope in South Africa, and so he probably is for a very short distance; but the old Boers, who have had much experience in the pursuit of both these animals and the blessbuck, insist that the latter far excel the former in point of speed and endurance. The blessbuck rarely extends himself, but when he does, there is no dog living that can come up to him; whereas there are plenty of really first-class greyhounds that, on fair ground, can run the springbuck to a standstill, or kill it in its course. An ordinary greyhound, however, has no chance with the springbuck, unless thoroughly well trained and possessed of considerable strength and good feet. Piet Terblans, an old Boer farmer, who prides himself on being the "Voor trekker" into the upper grass plains of the Orange Free State forty years ago, told me that he had frequently owned dogs capable of killing springbuck in a fair course, but never one that could touch a blessbuck which was unwounded. In those bygone days, when game was abundant, he had many opportunities of observing the tactics of the wild hunting-dogs pursuing their quarry, and he noticed that when the springbuck was the object of pursuit it was nearly always caught, though he had never seen a blessbuck taken in that way, nor had he ever heard of such a thing occurring in the district in which he had almost daily hunted.

One day in October when I was out with "Oom Piet," he put his "boer" dog and a very good staying greyhound after an old blessbuck ram, just to show me how the latter could "hump" himself, as the Americans would say. The blessbuck looked at first as if he had not the ghost of a chance, and as he started off he seemed to be afflicted with chronic rheumatism in all his legs—a noticeable trait in this species when moving along at their ordinary pace—but once the dogs began to close upon him he suddenly woke up, and in half a dozen strides he had fairly left those dogs about fifty yards behind, a distance he easily maintained until he was out of sight on the sky-line. The dogs



ATTITUDES OF SPRINGBUCK IN THE AIR AS THEY JUMP TO AVOID A BULLET THAT HAS STRUCK THE GROUND NEAR THEM

In the background a troop of buck are to be seen moving up wind. The heads are held close to the ground like hounds on scent.

returned about two hours afterwards, looking sick and sorry, and with very sore feet, whilst, of course, no more was heard of the buck. Now the springbuck, as its name implies, is fond of jumping. There is nothing it likes so much. In the cold early mornings of winter it may be seen capering about with its fellows, apparently trying who can jump the highest; and the antics it displays at such times are most amusing to watch. The rams, too, without actually fighting, may be seen chasing one another with tireless energy. By careful observation for nearly two months I was enabled to obtain from nature the sketches here reproduced, illustrating most of their characteristic attitudes of fear, fun, and repose. I camped out on the Karroo for a fortnight for this express purpose, where, with the aid of a powerful telescope, I could observe them from my tent-door at all hours of the day. The peculiarity which struck me most was the stiff manner in which the legs are held in all cases of extreme movement. It is only when the buck is walking very slowly, and feeding as he goes along, that the joints seem to be relaxed, all his quicker and more energetic motions being performed from the shoulders and thighs in a constrained and "collected" manner.[1] When playing, full of curiosity, or in extreme fear, as, for instance, when a bullet alights amongst a troop, the springbuck erects and expands the beautiful white dorsal ridge of hair which goes far to heighten the general smartness of his appearance. This line of snow-white hair, stretching from the middle of the back to the rump, is very conspicuous at a distance, and gives the buck a flashy, fairy-like aspect as he plays in the morning sun. It is also flirted up quickly and as rapidly lowered when suspicion is aroused.

The springbucks found in the Karroo district are as much finer than those of the Free State and Transvaal as the koodoo, reedbuck, and pallah, found south of the Limpopo, are superior to those ranging between that river and the Zambesi. This is most probably due to the prevalence of the sheepbush, on which the springbuck almost entirely subsists when the grass disappears. Its fattening property is to be seen in the domestic sheep raised in the Karroo, and the super-excellent mutton produced compared with any other in South Africa. The heads of these southern springbuck, with their beautiful lyrate curves and strongly-marked annulations, though not a great trophy, are amongst the prettiest and most desirable that a hunter can possess, as they recall with pleasure many a hard gallop and many a cartridge-case left behind on the Great Karroo. The horns of the male are said to average 12½ inches along the curve, only some few exceeding that. Out of ten animals, of which eight were males, which I killed at Beaufort West and in the Free State, only one old ram overtopped this, showing 14 inches of horn, outside measurement. Two which I brought home as curiosities measured 14¾ and 15½ inches respectively. They were both killed by Dr. Maloney, the most constant and successful springbuck shooter of Beaufort West. The horns of the latter animal are the finest I have seen, measuring 6½ inches round the base; they are, moreover, beautifully curved in at the tops.

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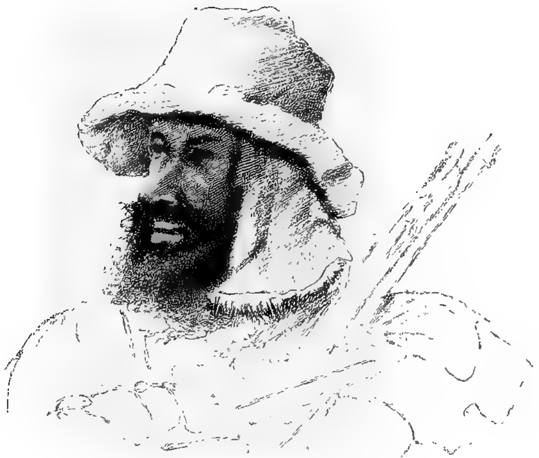
[1] I would especially call the attention of naturalists to this peculiarity on the part of the springbuck and nearly all the South African antelopes that I have observed. I do not consider that antelopes *under movement* have ever been correctly treated by any artist. Antelopes on the move are generally given the graceful movements of deer, whereas, with few exceptions, all their paces are performed with a certain stiffness and contraction of the limbs that are the reverse of graceful.

The hunting of the springbuck is still carried on much as it has always been—that is to say, by means of a properly-worked chain of hunting-carts or mounted horsemen stretched across the "veldt" at intervals of 1000 to 1700 yards apart, and acting under the guidance of an old hand, who generally occupies the centre, and gives directions as to the line to be observed on any sudden change of position. This is a custom not to be seen in any other part of the world, and one of the few methods by which a party of rifle-shooters can work together in harmony without any chance of spoiling each other's sport, or giving rise to petty jealousies. One man has just as good a chance as another, and if the game be properly played and the line well kept, each and every shooter will get good sport, should he only kill his one buck in the day.

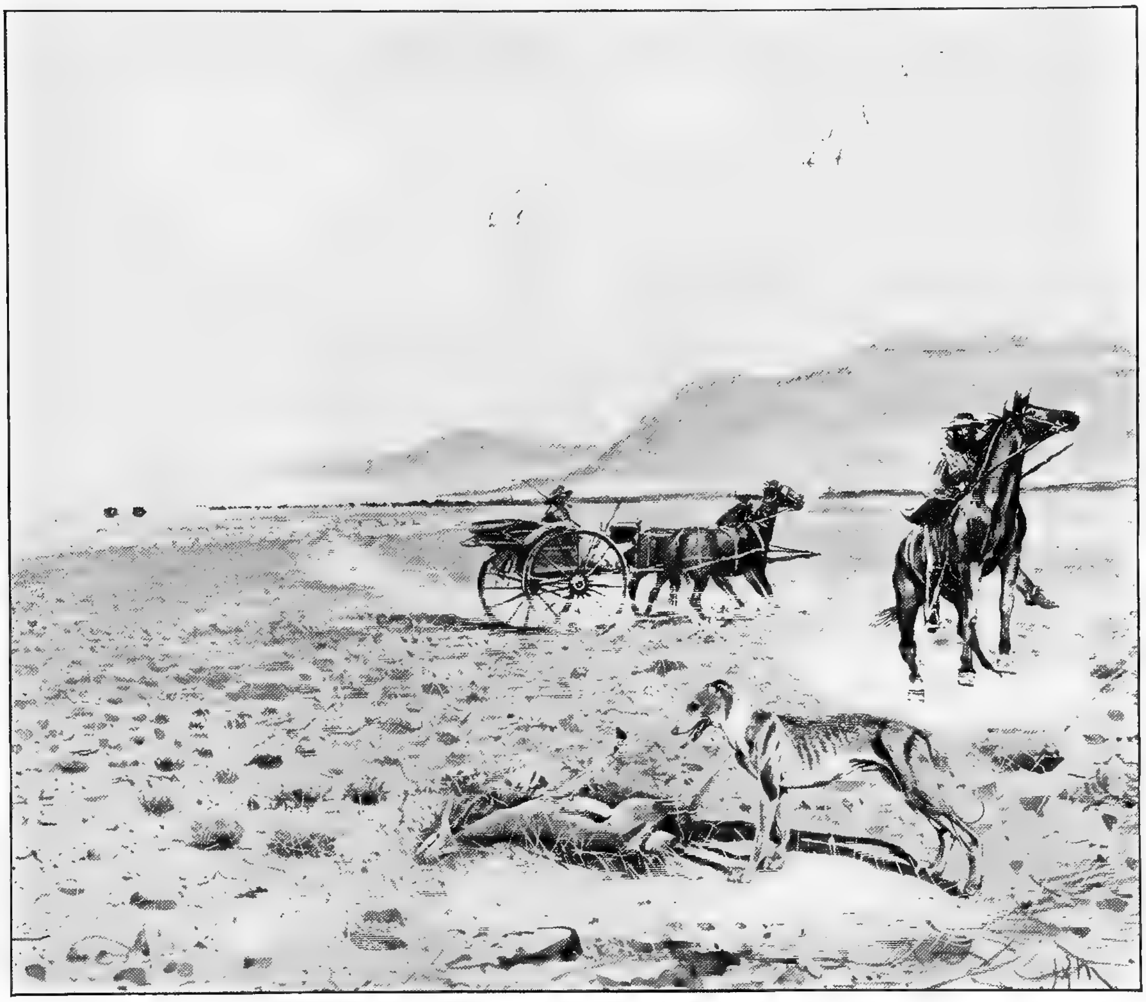


Karoo Shepherd

CHAPTER II

A SHORT account of my first day amongst the springbuck and their wild surroundings may probably interest such of my readers as may not be familiar with the methods now employed in pursuing these animals. First let me say that a springbuck hunt is, like any shoot at home, a thing that must be properly arranged beforehand. A rifle-shooter going out by himself into the Karroo stands but a poor chance with the bucks, for they are nearly sure to escape up wind past him, whilst distributing and frightening all the troops that may have collected on the favourite feeding-grounds during the night. In this respect springbuck resemble wild-fowl, which, even though repeatedly disturbed, will resort night after night to the same feeding-grounds when their favourite food is in a ripe condition. It is far better, therefore, in every case to fall in with the mode of hunting first brought into play by the early trekkers, and to form a party, as each and all not only make the meeting much more agreeable from a social standpoint, but also largely contribute to each other's sport by driving the bucks to one another.

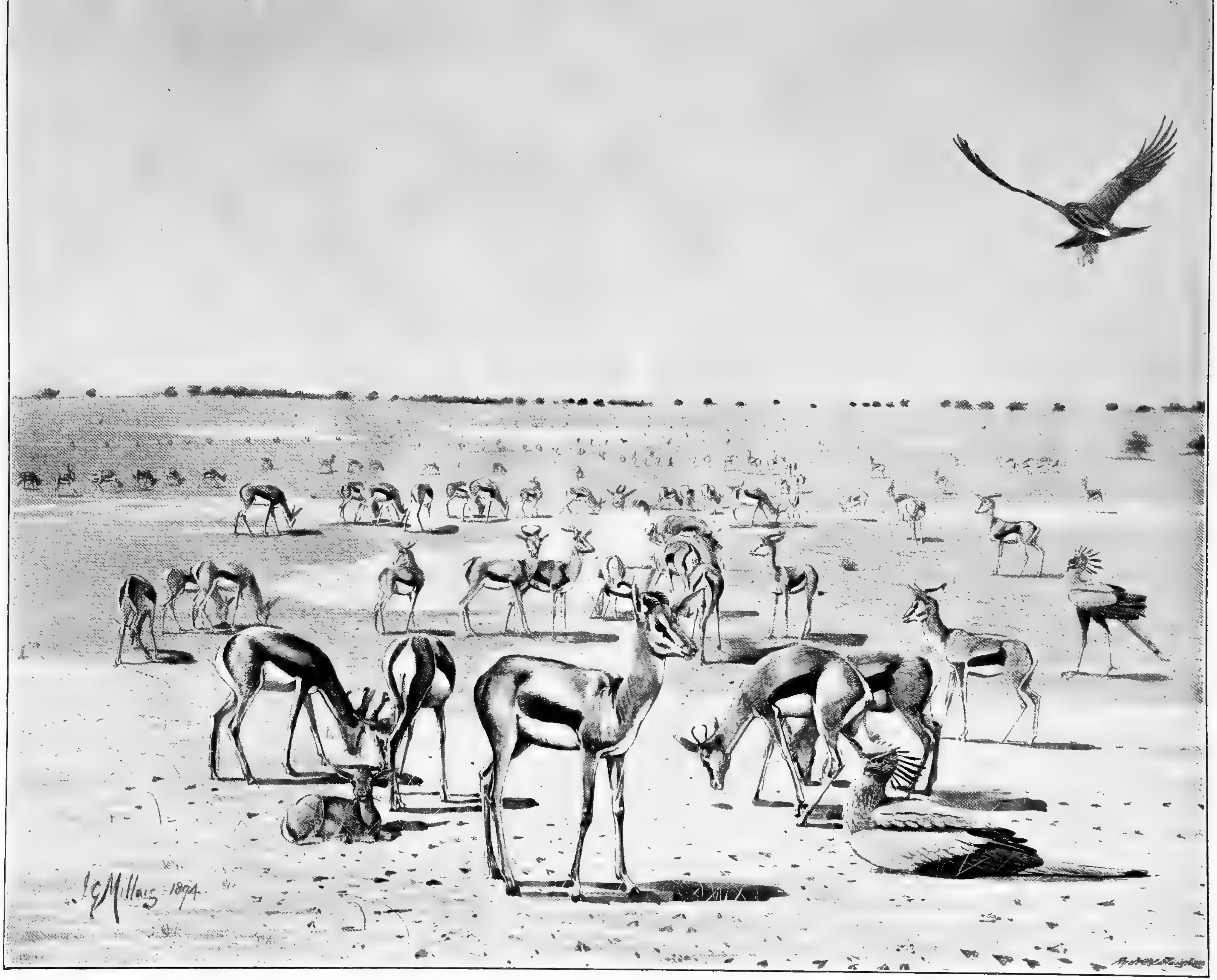
On Tuesday 29th February, under the guidance of Dr. Maloney, to whom I have before referred as the principal hunter of Beaufort West, a party of eight of us assembled at that gentleman's house at mid-day, and were soon seated in our carts or on horses ready to start for the evening's hunt. Ample provisions, ammunition, and warlike stores were deposited in the hunting-carts, and the whole turn-out, armed with Martini-Henry rifles, presented a much more formidable appearance than seemed consistent with the pursuit of the gentle and soft-eyed springbuck. After much good-humoured chaff we all set off down a road leading past the cool avenues and fruit-gardens out on to the broad expanse of the wilderness known as the Great Karroo, a vast uncultivated plain, smooth as a billiard-table, stretching away in all directions as far as the eye can reach, except only in the west, where frowns the sombre range of the Nieuveldt Mountains. The whole expanse presented to the eye shows only a great plain of cracked mud and stunted bushes about a foot high, where not even "weeds and flowers can promiscuous shoot." But presently one discovers that these stunted bushes are, in fact, the favourite sustenance of the springbuck that to-day roam over the face of the country, and that in former times they supported vast herds of blessbuck, bontebuck, springbuck, and black wildebeests. In the scattered bushlands, too, on the verge of this district, lived the graceful koodoos along with their enemies the lion and the leopard, and though to-day but a remnant remains of all these countless herds, there is still plenty of attraction here for the naturalist and



SPRINGBUCK COURSING
Showing the Horse, Cart, and Dog used for this sport.

the sportsman. Numerous troops of springbuck may be met with, a steinbuck may here and there be seen, also the silver and the long-eared jackal ; while hundreds of meercats burrow in the ground or live in the holes of the ard-vark. Even to-day the cheetah or hunting-leopard follows the herds of the springbuck like a shadow, whilst in the adjoining mountains the leopard devotes his attention mainly to the scattered troops of vaal and roi rhebuck, baboons, and klipspringers. The birds of this portion of South Africa are, however, more interesting and numerous than the mammals. In small parties the graceful Stanley crane stalks along the bare ground in search of locusts, its exquisite French-grey colouring contrasting strongly with the brown earth ; and at sunset their hoarse trumps may be heard as they wing their flight to some solitary spot far in the heart of the desert, where they can pass the night without fear of disturbance. Moving in a string across the sky they give the last touch to a scene of splendour such as only the Karroo can show ; for surely nowhere in the world are such sunsets to be seen as here. In the stormy winters of our northern islands, in the Orkneys and Shetland, I have watched them with keen delight, and on the north coast of Iceland I have seen the sun's rays extend along the edge of the Arctic ice, and tinging the clouded heavens with gorgeous hues impossible to depict. But grand as these sights were, they sink into utter insignificance by comparison with the aerial splendour of a Karroo sunset after the last of the summer rains have ceased. No words can describe them, no painting present them to the mind. Their mystic beauty is reserved only for those who see them ; and, if only to see them, it is well worth the while of any who can afford it, to exchange in mid-winter the chilling atmosphere of England for a month or more at Beaufort West.

Here on the Karroo plains may be seen that most interesting creature, the Secretary bird, plodding along in his thoroughly business-like manner. There is a consequential air of snug self-satisfaction about Mr. Secretary that reminds one of a man exceedingly well pleased with himself, perfectly cool and collected, highly particular as to his carriage, and supremely conscious of the sensation he is creating. Most of my readers know the Secretary bird by this time, he has been so often figured and described. He is a large raptorial bird, slate and white as to colour, and quite unique in all his movements as he walks about in search of food ; and the idea has gained ground that in his peregrinations his one aim and object is to befriend his protector, man, by hunting for venomous snakes and destroying them with the greatest bravery.


J G Millais 1894

SPRINGBUCK FEEDING

He is a strangely handsome and beautiful creature, and I for one am delighted that he is protected, as he certainly adds beauty to any landscape. But as for his snake-killing exploits, I think he is a bit of a fraud. No doubt he does occasionally kill these reptiles ; but the true poisonous snakes are rare in the open lands of the Colony, Free State, and Lower Transvaal, where these birds are mostly found. I don't believe he does any good at all, whereas his depredations are known to be very great among the young of khoorhans and francolins. Now, if Mr. Secretary would only just alter his habits a bit, and confine his hunting to the long grass of the bush countries to the north and west, he would find there plenty of puff adders, horned vipers, and mambas of various sorts, the destruction of which would be of real service to man. To the eye, his flight is exceedingly fine, resembling the grand movements of the eagle. Curiously enough, however, his evolutions in the air are singularly weak. He has no staying power, and in many instances has been captured by greyhounds, which, after keeping the bird continually on the wing for some time, are able to run it down, when finally forced to alight from sheer fatigue, and no longer able to rise again.

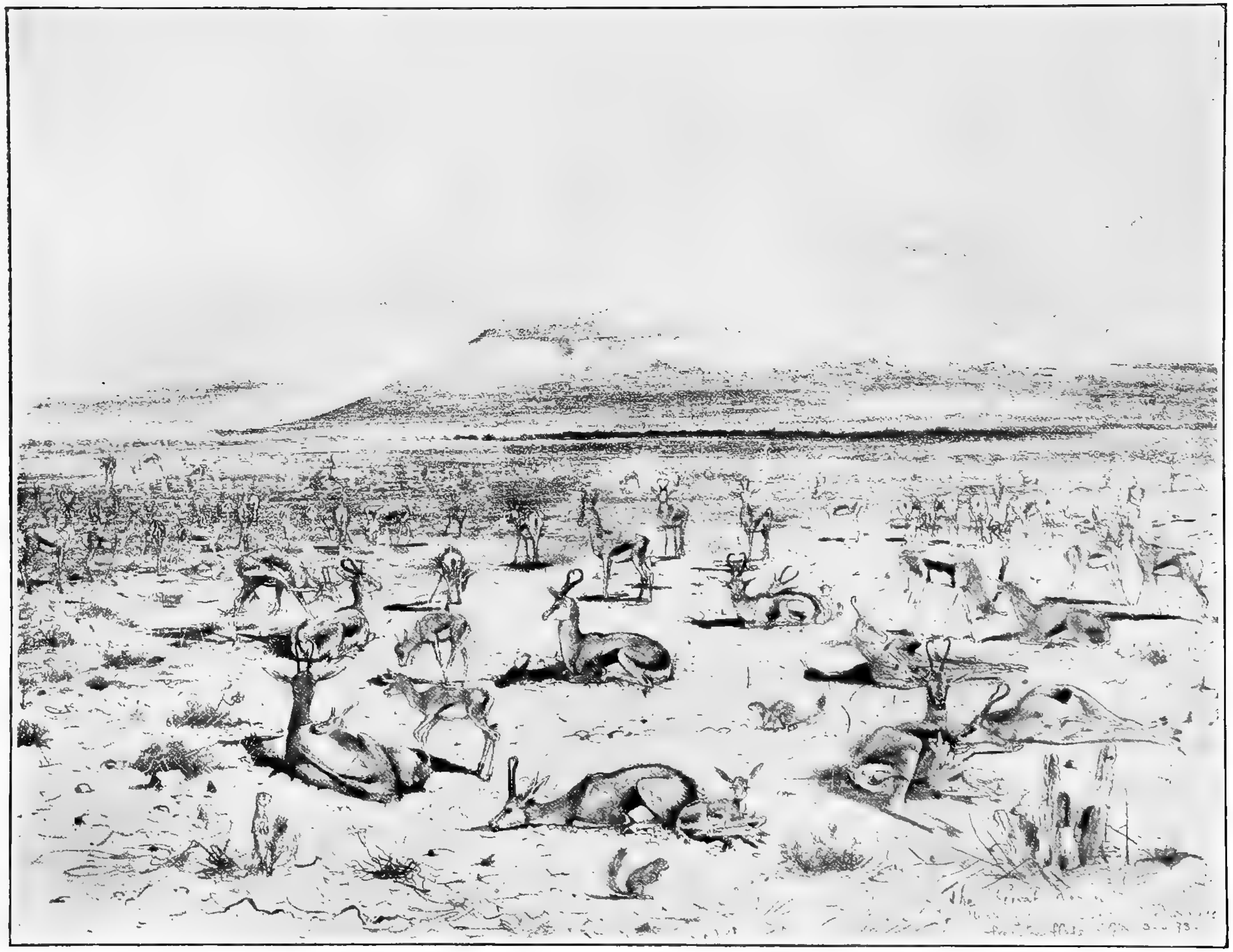
Nearly every family of birds is well represented in the Karroo itself, in its little oases of green, or its pools of water. Over the surface of the great sun-baked flats continually float eagles, hawks, and harriers in great variety. On its dams of water are found the Egyptian goose, the Cape shoveller, the pochard, several species of plovers and little waders ; and in the early morning the Namaqua sandgrouse come to their margins in large numbers to drink in company with pigeons and that exquisitely delicate little creature the dwarf dove, the most beautiful of a singularly beautiful family.

But, perhaps, the most characteristic birds of this part of the country are the bustard family, represented by the khoorhans and the ostrich, the latter of which is so nearly allied to that group that it may almost be termed one of them. These khoorhans or bustards are birds pre-eminently associated with South Africa, for they are *en evidence* in one species or another wherever you like to go ; and very cheering are their wild goose-like notes in the early morning and late evening to the heart of the sportsman who is stranded in some wild out-of-the-way wilderness ; for he knows that, having a shot-gun, he still has a good chance of obtaining something in the form of flesh for his supper. Even in the best game countries big game is so local and migratory that the sportsman has to depend to a large extent on the gun to supply the larder ; and but for these khoorhans, which are to be found almost everywhere, he would commonly have but a poor chance of a dinner. They are decidedly good birds for the table, but (except the blue khoorhan) are seldom inclined to fat. As I shall deal more fully with these birds in another chapter, I leave them for the present to return to the day's sport.

A drive of about two hours into the veldt brings us to one of the dams, where the horses must have a little rest before proceeding to the harder work of the evening. Whilst engaged in outspanning we obtain a good view of a big troop of wild ostriches, four old cocks and six hens, feeding and sunning themselves about a mile off on some low broken ground. Throughout the Karroo these splendid birds are protected, except during three days in August, when any person desiring to shoot one must obtain permission from the farmer on whose ground they happen to be running. As the birds wander over great tracts of country, it is not always an easy task to kill one, though good opportunities frequently occur when springbuck shooting is proceeding. Some few, however, are killed by the farmers themselves, as it is part of the business of the shepherds to hunt for ostrich nests and to report to their masters whenever one is found. The shooter can then, by waiting for the return of the cock bird, be pretty sure of bagging him, provided he displays a certain amount of caution and keeps well out of sight in a hole previously dug for the purpose.

When running, the ostrich has a very noble and pleasing appearance ; and a troop frightened and starting to run is a sight not easily to be forgotten. Their powers of sight are extraordinary. As the sportsman moves down wind in search of springbuck he may often see ostriches moving along in a mirage above the wavering haze of the horizon line. The birds, from the height of their position having observed his advances long before he has seen them, give the hint to the troops of springbuck in their vicinity. This notification of danger in a much-hunted country like the Karroo is quickly passed from one troop of bucks to another, till it is no uncommon sight to see reflected in the air five or six hundred animals moving along in one of the mirages so common on the South African plains. As optical illusions, these mirages are simply marvellous ; an ostrich looks like a little black blot above the horizon sailing along through space, and closely resembling a man on horseback. Some indication of one of these scenes will be found in the sketch on p. 27.

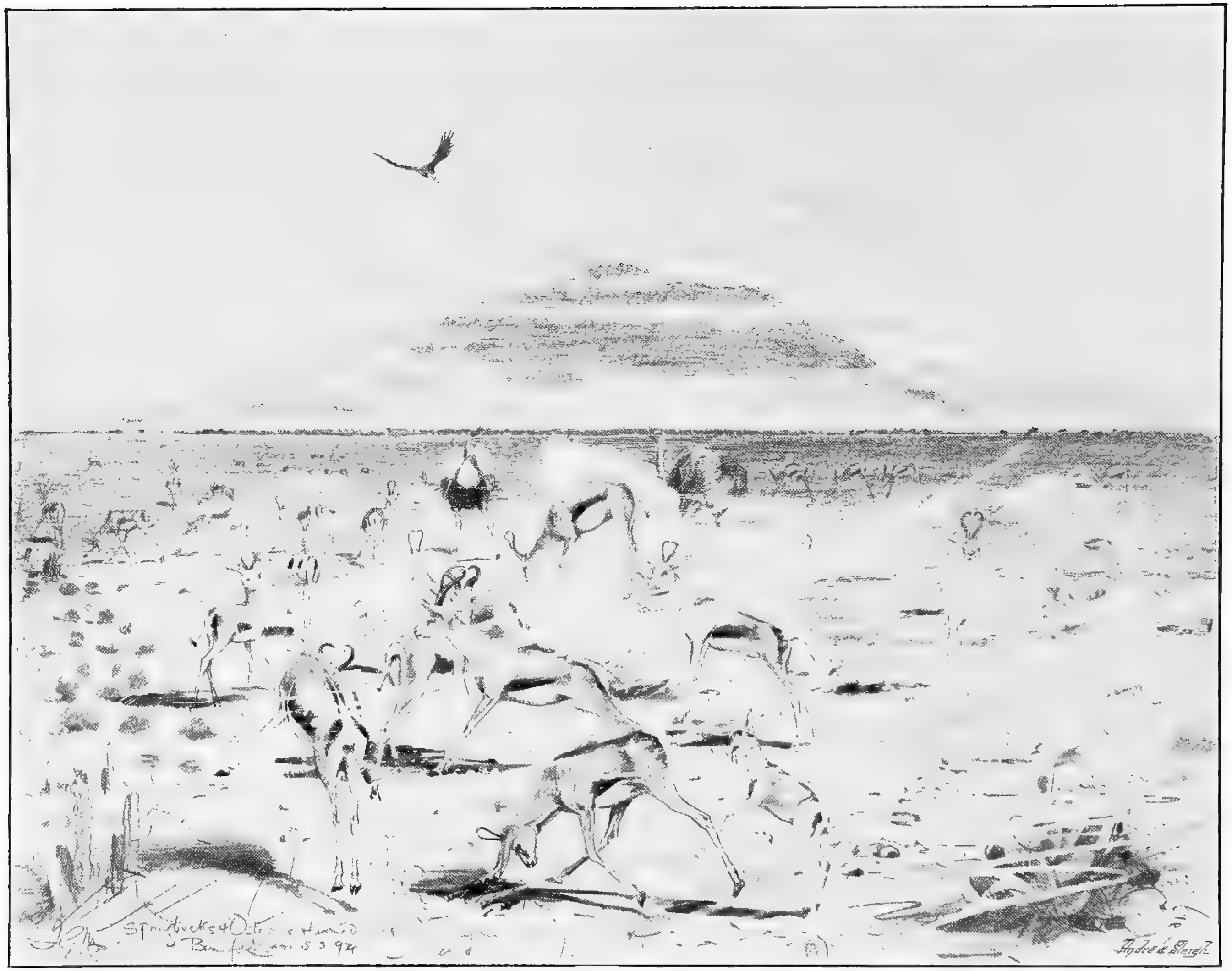
Half an hour after leaving the dam, where we had refreshed our horses with a drink and a roll in the dust, and ourselves with water-melons and liquids of various kinds, we began to see troops of springbuck on our left hand, scattered



SPRINGBUCK RESTING

about in small parties about a mile from the road. When a large number of these had been passed a halt was called and the plan of campaign laid out by Dr. Maloney, who got up in his cart and gave us a lecture, the humour of which was characteristic of a son of that "little grane isle in the say." Our plan was then fixed to keep our line of carts at intervals of 1700 yards apart, and to work down wind towards the mountains in front of us, at the foot of which was Mr. Weber's farm, where we were to pass the night. Anxious that I should see the best of the sport, the Doctor kindly took me in his cart and gave me every assistance in his power. We had also with us two fine greyhounds, ready for a course in case we should wound a buck. Three-quarters of an hour elapsed before the line was formed ; then off we went, trotting slowly over the veldt, and keeping our gigantic line as accurate as possible. As, owing to the refraction of the atmosphere, one could hardly see more than two carts on either side, we had necessarily to trust a good deal to guesswork as to our relative distances when once the shooting began ; and we were fairly within reach of the springbuck. They were apparently several hundreds in number, and were beginning to trek backwards and forwards uneasily, as if endeavouring to ascertain at which point they could circumvent the approaching enemies, and that not being at once apparent, they commenced retreating slowly. Small troops here and there stopped and waited till the carts had approached within four or five hundred yards, in the hope of breaking past between two of the advancing points.

This is where the shooting comes in, and where the sportsman must exercise his judgment and discretion in endeavouring to stop the bucks wishing to retire, at such a range that they can be got to stand and offer a fair chance, without frightening them by too close an approach ; otherwise they dash back in big troops, giving only difficult running shots which are not scored once in a hundred cartridges, unless the shooter happens to be very close to the animals, and they are running straight away from him. The line was fairly well kept for about two hours ; and so far as we could gather from the fusilade going on to right and left of us, every one was getting his fair share of the shooting. Maloney and I were taking our shots alternately ; but as he was very anxious that I should get a buck on my first day, I am afraid I had rather the best of the shooting. After about twenty-five shots I wounded an old ram, which we followed back for about a mile and eventually lost. In this way we got so much out of the line that it was some time before we could again pick up our places in the alignment. So the sport went on without any luck till the sun began to touch the western point of the mountains, and we knew that we had only a short time left in which to get our buck if we meant to do so. By this time we had made the great turn towards Mr. Weber's farm, where we were to sleep. The light was also momentarily getting worse, and we had entirely lost touch with our neighbours, as each and all had got scattered after different troops of buck, though all knew where we were eventually to meet. Maloney and I had already turned our horses' heads straight towards the mountains, and we were trotting along slowly amongst some broken sandhills, when we espied a small troop of buck feeding under one of the ridges, and in such a favourable position that the Doctor suggested I should dismount and endeavour to stalk them. They, however, took alarm and moved on to the ridge itself when I had approached within 300 yards of them ; there was nothing left for me but to lie down and take my chance. Good luck favoured me this time, and the bullet told loudly on the quarter of the ram at which I had fired, and in another minute Maloney galloped up with the cart. We gave chase at once to the wounded animal, which left its companions, as wounded animals always do. The Doctor and I had two more shots apiece at the buck, my second one again wounding him slightly underneath, so we decided to slip the larger greyhound of the two. The dog bounded out of the cart and at once saw and gave chase to his quarry ; and we had all our work cut out to keep the two animals well in view. Now, galloping over the open veldt in a hunting-cart is very exciting, but not at all comfortable. There are big stones sometimes, there are innumerable holes and earths of animals that give way, and there are bushes of various density and size, all of which, if the cart is lightly built, tend to elevate the riders very considerably from their seats, and to create a sensation in the nether region next morning that is the reverse of pleasant. The fact is that in galloping wildly over the Karroo you spend most of your time in the air, and when not there you are hanging on like grim death to an angular and excited dog, two rifles, and a handrail. The excitement is grand ; there is no mistake about it, any more than about the soreness next morning ; as a liver-shaker springbuck coursing with a cart is unrivalled. On this occasion, too, as on others, when anything in the shape of sport or excitement was on foot, my dear Æsculapius betrayed his nationality in more ways than one, keeping me in fits of laughter that added in no small measure to the difficulty of preserving one's balance in the cart. The course lasted about a mile and a half, for the springbuck can move about as well on three legs as on four, and during the run we had a splendid view of the chase throughout. The old dog stuck to his



SPRINGBUCK COMMENCING TO RUN

game most gallantly, and eventually turned the buck towards the hills, and hauled him down in a cloud of dust some 200 yards ahead of the cart as we careered along at full speed. The springbuck, which proved to be a good ram, was soon grallocked and packed on the cart; and as darkness was now setting in we hastened towards the lights of the farmhouse, where we received a most hospitable welcome from Mr. Weber's black servant, Abraham, the master and mistress being absent at the time.

An excellent meal of chops and eggs speedily refreshed our bodies, and we were soon as merry as sandboys, shooting our shots over again, and vowing the springbuck was the most infernal brute on this wide, wide earth to slay. Then we turned in for the night, some to sleep on the floor, some on sofas, I myself being honoured with a real bed, as I was the only one who had been so fortunate as to slay a buck. This was a wonderful bed of the wide Dutch type, covered with one of those big feather-mattresses into which you go "squash" and never know where you are going to stop; redolent, too, of the faint atmosphere of the farmyard still lingering within its folds. Five o'clock next morning saw us all up and fighting for washing materials; then a hurried breakfast, and all are inspanned and off by six. We hear that most of the springbuck are to the left of the farm on ground untouched the previous night; so we determine to take this in, and by a circuitous route work gradually back to Beaufort West, a distance of thirteen miles, keeping the left flank well forward to head the big troop of buck from working out in the main Karroo, and to get them split up if possible. For a long time we saw but a few animals, and during a short burst after them the cart occupied by Mr. Peter Flower came to utter grief; but having patched it up as well as we could with "reims," we went on again. By and by, just as the pleasant warmth of the morning sun began to play on the great plains, a most beautiful sight presented itself. The main troop of springbuck, numbering, at a rough guess, about 800 animals, moved by the carts on the far right and were seen advancing towards us in a perfect mirage, the whole mass of them appearing in one long line, with the counterpart of each reversed beneath him. They seemed to be coming along in a leisurely manner, but in reality they were travelling at considerable speed—a fact we soon became aware of, as it took us all our time to gallop the cart forward and split them up. A number of troops also followed the big one; the Doctor therefore deemed it advisable that we should separate; so he betook himself to his black pony, which William, his half-caste boy, brought up, and the boy joined me in the cart and took the reins. My friend galloped forward for half a mile, and shortly afterwards I heard his rifle going. Hardly had he disappeared than a big troop of springbuck came past me within 150 yards, all moving at their best pace, some springing high in the air and going over each other's backs in their anxiety to get out of danger's way. I now had my hands full, and blazed away pretty considerably, wounding one animal, which, however, appeared able to follow the rest; so I left him for the present and endeavoured to check the tide of the troops as best I could, getting a shot here and there whenever an animal stood and looked back. The very last buck of the lot, an old ram, stood just as I was about to climb into the cart again, and offered me a good chance at about 400 yards, and I had the satisfaction of seeing him roll over stone-dead as the bullet reached him. He was a splendid old fellow with a fine head, and I need hardly say I was greatly pleased at my good fortune. To save time, I grallocked him and threw him into the cart as quickly as possible, and I had hardly done this when up rode Mr. Fraser, one of our party, to tell me that he had seen the buck which I had previously wounded, and that he thought I should probably get it if I retraced my steps a short distance. This William and I did, and we shortly spotted the poor creature going along with his head down and looking very bad, so I concluded we should have little trouble with him. However, as I dismounted from our cart at about 200 yards' distance from the buck, he woke up in the most extraordinary fashion and went off in his best style, continuing his series of springs until he was almost out of sight on the horizon. I therefore deemed it useless to follow him.[1] This necessitated a considerable detour for me to get back to the line, and on the way I met Maloney, just as we were going to outspan and cook breakfast. He had had very bad luck, and had wounded two bucks and lost them both. Then more chops and coffee; and how delicious they were, too, with the crisp morning air as an appetiser, and afterwards a rest and a smoke under the welcome shade of the mimosa thorns.

Now, springbuck-hunting in a cart is all very well for one day, but a second day of it, with all the gymnastic performances necessary to maintain anything like a seat is a weariness of the flesh, however good and exhilarating the sport. The rider is painfully reminded of what happened the day before, and of morning experiences to follow it; for unfortunately there is a next morning. It is just this next morning business, dear readers, I should strongly counsel you to avoid; unless, that is to say, you have no objection to taking your meals standing for a few days. You can avoid this to some extent by

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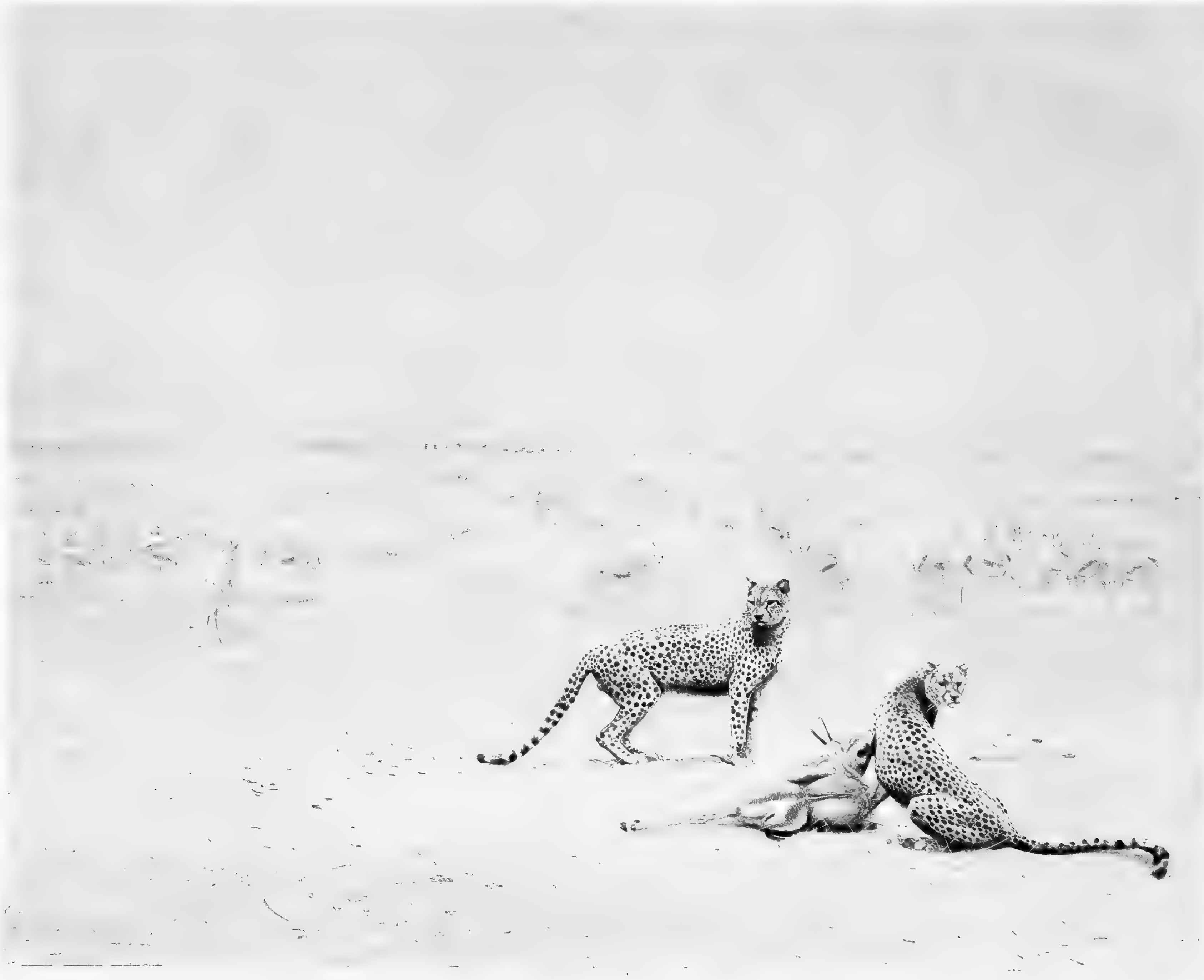
[1] Springbuck, for their size, are probably the toughest animals in the world, and are said to have been known to carry away as many as four Martini bullets when not absolutely placed in a vital spot.



A Karroo Landscape

taking a day's ride, followed by a hot bath, or still better, by never going in a cart at all. I was not sorry, then, when on starting for home after breakfast, the Doctor kindly gave me a mount on his pony "Blackie."

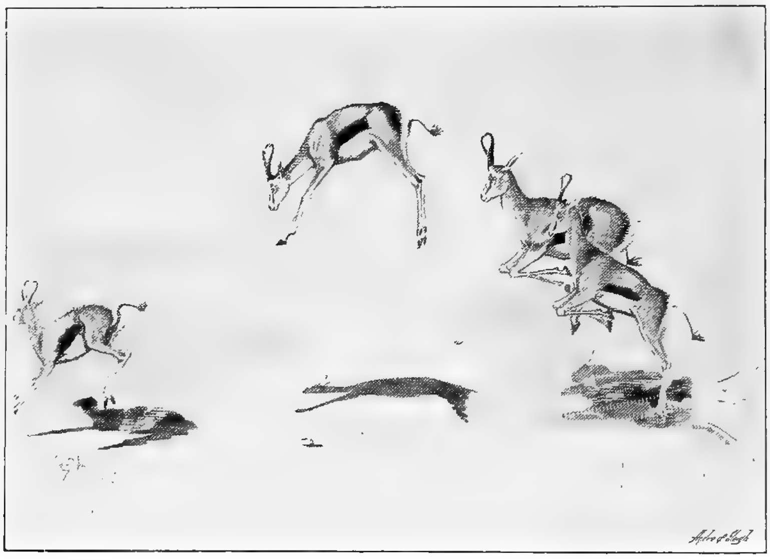
On the way we fell in with some more buck and had some more shots. Blackie was the most perfectly-trained shooting-pony that I had ever ridden—a real treasure—apparently enjoying the shooting just as much as any English hunter does his particular form of sport. He was a high-spirited little pony, about fourteen hands, and though finely built about the legs, was as strong and sure over rough ground as a Basuto. Strange to say, too, he had been regularly used for racing, which generally unfits any horse for shooting purposes. The moment he was wanted to stop, he did so, and after the reins were thrown over his head he would stand like a rock though you fired many shots round or even across him, a proceeding few horses care much about. Such a little horse is as rare in South Africa as anywhere else; and though I afterwards bought him from Maloney, I did not take him into the interior with me—a fact I bitterly regretted during the whole of my trip.

Quite at the end of our hunt, amongst the last few bucks that came past us, I managed to intercept an old ewe, which became so confused as to stand and give me a couple of chances within 200 yards, a very unusual occurrence. My second shot disabled her, and I was mounting my horse again when I saw the big greyhound half-way towards the springbuck and knew that the Doctor had seen how matters stood. The ewe was, however, too badly hit to run, and I quickly put her out of pain and rejoined my companion, who had just killed a ram and was following another which he had wounded, but it eventually got away after a considerable hunt.

Thus ended our day's hunt, and we were home again at Beaufort West early in the afternoon, having had a most enjoyable day's sport. This was only the first of many delightful days spent on the Kalk with my friend Dr. Maloney, and though the bag was generally reversed, he usually killing as many as three or four buck while I was quite content when I got one, I thoroughly enjoyed myself in the fine air, and soon got very fit with the hard exercise on Blackie, whom I always afterwards rode.

It did me so much good that two friends and myself decided to camp out on Mr. Weber's farm, in accordance with his kind invitation, as I knew I could not have a better opportunity for studying the habits of the springbuck.

Bad luck, however, hampered us from the first day, as the summer rains and thunder-storms burst in all their fury, the evening we were out, and continued with gradually increasing violence for twelve days. Every evening, just as we were getting ready to go for a ride round the veldt on the chance of picking up a buck, the heavens would darken and a perfect deluge follow, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Such storms as I had never experienced before burst over us; and our only amusement was to sit and shiver round the pole of a very leaky government tent, and "cuss" Africa and all things African. We constantly moved our ground, eventually trying to cross the Nelsport River to Mr. Jackson's farm, some forty miles from Beaufort West; but finding it impossible to get the cart across the swollen rivers, we at last determined to return to Weber's. Here we fairly caught it. Never in my life have I seen such floods of rain, or heard and seen such thunder and lightning as prevailed on those three last nights. Sleep was out of the question. The whole Karroo was transformed from a hard plain of cracked mud into a vast quagmire; and to keep clear of the mud we pitched our miserable apology for a tent on a stony slope, thinking it would afford at least comparative dryness. Disappointment, however, awaited us. During the last night our tent was completely flooded, and all night long we stood up shivering round the pole, watching a small river disporting itself over our Kaross beds. This was a bit too much for my two companions, who were both at Beaufort West to recover from lung troubles; and as I did not care to remain out alone on the chance of its clearing up, and I had, moreover,



SPRINGBUCK CROSSING A ROAD

obtained all the sketches of springbuck that I required, we struck camp the following morning.

I cannot conclude this chapter without saying what pleasure it affords me to recall the time I spent at Beaufort West, with all the friendly associations it conjures up. To the casual visitor it may, perhaps, seem deadly dull, as indeed may any of the South African towns; but a man who spends some time there, entering into the spirit of the place and taking his share of such sports and pastimes as it affords, will find no lack of amusement or of pleasant companions. There are good fellows and good sportsmen to be found everywhere, and amongst the best of these I reckon my friend Dr. Maloney of Beaufort West. He will know, if he ever sees this work, that amongst the many travellers whom he has so often befriended there is at least one who will never forget his kindness and hospitality.

CHAPTER III

A JOURNEY of two days and nights brings the traveller to the modern Golden City, Johannesburg. The route is at once wearisome and monotonous, as on either side of the train there is nothing to be seen but apparently measureless expanses of grassy flats, a class of scenery which interests only the man whose heart is wrapt up in Boer meal and cows. To ordinary travellers the uplands of the Orange Free State and the Southern Transvaal have nothing to say, for there is a solemnity and a silence about them that palls on both eye and brain. This is now the true home of the Dutch Boer, and long may he thrive and enjoy it. A beautiful landscape does not appeal to him, unless there are many fat sheep, oxen, and horses dotted over it, and nice spruits for the watering of the same. With such possessions, and with 10,000 morgen of land that he can call his own, he is indeed a happy man ; his ambition is satisfied and he ceases to think of change. I like the Boer, and admire his free, independent spirit ; and though amongst a certain class of Englishmen and Afrikanders in South Africa it is almost looked upon as unpatriotic to vent such opinions, I must say that the Boer is and has been much wronged. There are thousands of Boers at the present day who are wishing to extend the hand of friendship and comradeship to the English and South Africans, but their fears of being swindled and imposed upon hold them back, their experience in days past having lain only amongst Englishmen of an inferior type. All this is, of course, only the result of ignorance. Some Boer farmer has been badly bitten by a travelling loafer or rascal calling himself an Englishman (for till quite recently men of this stamp swarmed in South Africa) with the result that the Dutchman includes the whole nationality of that rascal in a sweeping condemnation, and hates them accordingly. He is never tired of telling the story of his mishap to his relations, and at the same time he seems never to forgive or forget an injury. He brings up his children to regard the Englishman as an enemy whose acquaintance may be cultivated for the sake of his purse, but never loved or trusted under any circumstances whatever. When, however, the Dutchman of the right sort (and there are plenty of such), can be made to overcome his prejudices so far as to take a liking to any foreigner, I do not believe there is a truer friend than a Dutch Boer. There is also the difficulty of language to be taken into account. Ibsen, the famous Norwegian dramatist, when asked why he did not go to England, replied: "Of all things in the world that I should like to do, the one is to go to England and study the people; but I cannot speak the language. No man can know the *heart* of any people or understand their true feelings unless he can speak their language, and take in what they say." This is quite true. A man may live all his life amongst the mountains of Scotland and hear Highland pipe-music every day, but he is not in the smallest degree capable of giving a judgment upon that particular form of music unless he has imbibed the spirit of the hills and of the men who live there; neither can he form any conception of what that music means to those who understand its language and are masters of the instrument. So it is with South Africa. Go where you may, you will hear the Dutchman abused for his meanness, conceit, double-dealing, cruelty, and lying by those who really know nothing of him. This is a nice little catalogue of offences. But the Dutchman is not half so black as he is painted. Trust him fairly and honestly, live with him, and (above all) learn his language and bear in mind what he may not improbably have suffered at the hands of some unscrupulous Englishman; and I venture to say you will not be disposed to endorse these calumnies.

Not that there is anything heroic about the Boer. Most of them are very ordinary creatures—stupid, conceited, and lumpish to the last degree—but to my mind it is simply abominable to hear a race of fine hardy pioneers and farmers, as they are, abused by a lot of third-rate potmen, bar-loafers, and counter-jumpers, who know as little of the real Boer as they do of the solar system, and judge of them only by the class of anti-English Boers which they themselves have done so much to create. I saw something of this while trekking up to Mashonaland. An Englishman or Afrikander on tramp casually seats himself by your fire, and after a few commonplace remarks about the state of the road, the water, game, etc., he will probably abuse the natives, and commiserate you on having such people as Boers for companions. For my part, such sympathy was thrown away, and now more than ever do I feel how little it was called for. I lived with a family of Boers for six months, and found the head of it as thorough a gentleman as I ever met in my life. His family were, each and all, as kind and simple in their ways as any Scotch farmers. But before I arrived at this conclusion I must confess I had rather a coarse time of it, as I could not then speak Dutch, and had to make a daily fight against prejudices and suspicions. When they found that I only wished them well and treated them as friends, their attitude entirely changed, and before the end of my stay I felt myself quite one of the family.

No traveller visiting Johannesburg will be disappointed with what he sees there. It is really one of the sights of the world, and contains many wonderful things which can be seen nowhere but there. Seven years ago the town was not; but to-day you can walk down Pritchard and Commissioner streets and see plate-glass windows displaying the latest London fashions, splendid buildings, electric light, tramways, music halls, fine hotels, and all that goes to make up the comforts of modern civilisation, which has so suddenly blossomed with the gold discovery. "Jo" has been already described by abler pens than mine, so I will content myself with noting only some of the more salient features of the place that particularly attracted my attention. What strikes one most at first sight is the contrast between past and present that here makes itself felt. New as the town is, there still lingers in it the wild spirit of the interior, which constitutes its greatest charm to a traveller. This is most apparent in the morning market, when the Boers, with their transport waggons and splendid spans of magnificent oxen, come in, to buy, sell, and be hired. There are two of these great market squares in Johannesburg; and to the student of human nature or the artist they are endless sources of delight. There sits the old Boer on the top of his waggon, solemnly blinking in the sun as he puffs away at his Magaliesburg and watches the manœuvres of his Natal Zulu driving the dearly-loved span with consummate skill; for these boys can drive and no mistake, merely using their voices as a scourge, where a less patient and weaker-lunged white man would lose both his temper and his voice. There, too, may be seen Jews selling cheap wares; black boys waiting to be hired; Malays hawking bijouterie; sharp auctioneers yelling forth the manifold attractions of hungry-looking steeds whose beauty no one seems to see but themselves; hard little Basuto ponies dashing hither and thither, mounted by every class and nationality under the sun; and amongst the crowd a big smattering of loafers and rascals ever on the look-out for doing a "softy"—desperate men these, as San Francisco knew only too well in the flush of its prosperity—men who refrain from the use of the revolver to-day not from any objection to taking life, but because this little weapon has never been acclimatised in any part of South Africa where the British have obtained a foothold.

It was a pretty illustration of the contrast of yesterday with to-day that I witnessed, one fine morning, in front of the Grand Hotel. A young lady, evidently a music-hall star fresh from Whitechapel, had been drawing crowded houses in "Jo" with a more than *risque* song, and to-day, dressed like a stage duchess, she was preparing to take the air in the finest chariot in the place. A group of men were watching her from the stoep of the "Central," and as she climbed up into her seat with the assistance of her temporary cavalier, she regaled them with a display of ankle that was something more than generous. At the same moment a Shangan witch doctor, one of the most picturesque and wild-looking creatures I ever saw, stalked slowly up the middle of the street—for these men are not allowed to walk on the pavement—and as the idol of the hour moved off, the attention of the crowd was directed to him. From head to foot he was bedecked with bizarre ornaments characteristic of a land of savages accustomed from childhood to regard them as emblems of supernatural power ; and conscious of this, he carried himself with an air of dignity that could not fail to impress even those who knew him for the rascal he undoubtedly was. For my part, I was immensely struck with the picture he presented in contrast with his strange surroundings—this meeting together of the old world and the new. No particle of interest betrayed itself in his face as he gazed for a moment on this vulgar, flashily-dressed woman, to whom all eyes were directed. His mind was no doubt on his business, to wait upon some poor wretch who could possibly be killed or cured by one of his mysterious drugs. And this queen of society, as in his mind she undoubtedly was, belonged to a world in which he had no part.

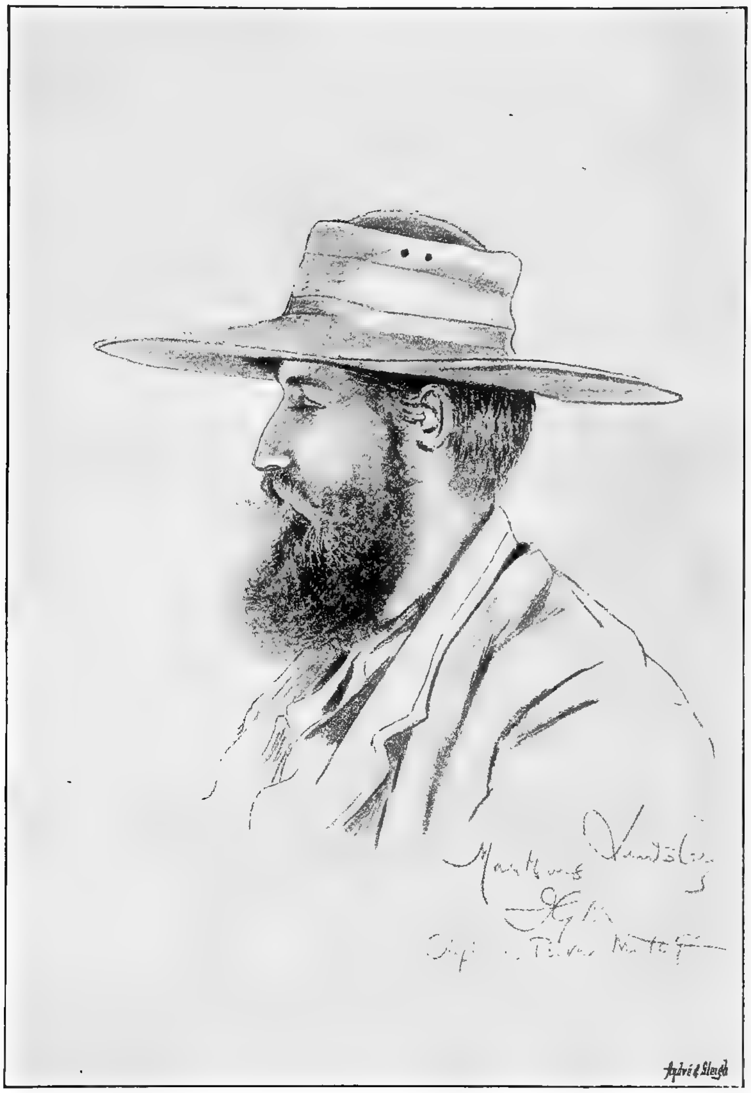
After passing four days in the Golden City, I came across a young Afrikander, who after some talk promised to introduce me to a Dutch farmer who was about to start on a hunting trip to the Low Countries. This he was good enough to do the following morning, when for the first time I made the acquaintance of Martinus Landsberg, a good-looking and well-mannered fellow of the better-class Dutch, and fortunately able to speak English well. We soon came to business. I hired his waggon and oxen for an eight months' trip into the interior, and arranged for our starting together on the following Tuesday.

Now, a prolonged expedition in a land like this is rather a serious business. There is the outfit to be thought about, black boys and horses to engage, stores and ammunition to be got together. To be ready with all this at three days' notice, the waggon piled up and everything ready to start, was rather a tall order. But Johannesburg is nothing if not expeditious; for excellence of supplies and promptitude of delivery it would be hard to beat. On Tuesday, at the time appointed, the thing was done, and well done too. The waggon was there fitted with a brand-new tent, new tires on the wheels, and a splendid span of "salted" oxen, fat and fit to go anywhere; the whole turn-out looked first-class. There, too, were my groceries, saddles, bridles, Martini rifles, ammunition—in short, everything I had ordered—stowed snugly away, as well as three Basuto ponies that I had purchased at an average price of £10 apiece. For "boys" for the interior we were to wait until we reached Landsberg's farm, where the right sort were to be had. In the meantime a Zulu youth named Jap was to do our bidding; and a most excellent, good-natured fellow he proved to be.

To save details interesting only to those who are contemplating a similar journey, let me say here that everything requisite for our outfit is set forth in Mr. Bryden's admirable volumes *Gun and Camera* and *The Sportsman in South Africa*. You need bring nothing from England, save your pet rifle and cartridges for it, and (if you like) a saddle, and some of your favourite books.

3 P.M. on 12th April saw us ascending the last of the range of hills leading eastwards from the "Golden City"—hills under which lie buried more riches than will be brought to light in this generation. Here the quartz-crushers are at work, filling the air with thunderous sounds; but one by one we leave them all behind, along with the recumbent forms of Kaffirs asleep or drunk. And now Johannesburg, with its poor, striving, and sweating humanity, vanishes from our sight. With almost startling suddenness silence and solitude take the place of crash and boom and rush; the fine fresh air of the veldt blows in our faces, and once more we feel the joy of life in a land where Mrs. Grundy is unknown. Tremendous contrast this with life in Johannesburg. There they are proud of their city, and in showing you around are careful to remind you that it is but a thing of seven years old—a circumstance highly creditable to one so advanced in every form of iniquity. Perchance, too, you may be taken to one of the music-halls, where you will find the performances sufficiently loose to gratify the lowest taste. Nor will they forget the hospitality due to a stranger. You will be liberally entertained with concoctions dear to the heart of the Johannesburger, but which you devoutly pray you may never taste again. Then—their womenfolk. It may be that I was unfortunate

in what I saw, but judging from those who caught my eye, I should say that ladies are few and far between, whilst gorgeously-dressed damsels of the barmaid type are everywhere *en evidence.* Beautiful women, too, some of them—illustrating, perhaps, the observation of the immortal Bacon that women of great beauty are seldom of great virtue. Yes, they are go-ahead people in Johannesburg, and know how to draw the dollars as well as any nation on earth. There, as elsewhere, men will give to beauty what they would deny to ugliness; and, wise in their generation, the Salvation Army sent into the midst of this money-grubbing community a girl whose personal charms not even



the hideous costume of the "Hallelujah Lass" could hide. I saw her there, selling the *War Cry*, and am bound to say a more lovely face and figure have seldom crossed my path. A right modest girl too, to all appearance, with a sweet supplicating manner that melted the hearts of the sternest men among them. It was amusing to watch her as she walked along the stoep of my hotel, and took one man after another captive by the charm of her looks and manner. Nobody wanted her wares, or cared twopence about the "Army," but nobody, not even the hardest city man, could refrain from shelling out the "tickie" (3d. bit) when once her eyes met his. Nor did any one dream of offering her an insult. Rather, perhaps, she brought to many in the throng a glad reminder of some one at home, that for a moment woke into tenderness hearts long hardened by the baneful influences of the place ; for here disappointed hopes and crushed ambitions are plainly written on the faces of half the men one meets. It is pitiable to see them, many of them clever fellows and gentlemen in every sense of the word, yet here they are without a *sou* in their pockets or the possibility of a dinner, unless lucky enough to earn the money by some menial work that they would be ashamed to undertake at home. Specious advertisements and newspaper puffs have much to answer for in this way. The sound of the "Golden City" may also have its attractions in some ears ; but in sober truth it is "golden" only to the lucky ones of the earth whom fortune favours here as elsewhere. For the rest it is in most cases a Slough of Despond.

And now, back to our waggon and the happier life that lies before us. Trekking over the high veldt is neither interesting nor amusing. Nothing but great waving plains and undulating uplands meet the eye. Birds are few, other animals nowhere ; and though now and then the harsh note of the khoorhans or South African bustards may be heard afar off, they are here far too shy and retiring in their habits to offer a shot, except when taken unawares. For a whole week we journey steadily on, doing fifteen miles at a stretch in the early morning, and sometimes fifteen more in the evening, the tedium of the march relieved only by our passage through the Blessbok Lacter, a mud-swamp about sixty miles east of Johannesburg. Here we must inevitably have stuck fast but for the combined exertions of Jap and Landsberg (or "Teenie," as I now called him), who for about an hour applied their whips to the oxen with a vigour and persistence hardly excelled by the mosquitoes who invaded our tent later on and did their best to keep us awake all night.

But here I must break off again, to give some account of the birds we are presently to meet with. The bustard family—the finest game birds in the world—is better represented here than in any other quarter of the globe. The climate suits them to perfection, and the vast plains of sandy soil covered with bush and grass that stretch away from the Zambesi to Cape Town furnish all that is needed for the preservation and increase of the species. Wherever there is bush, there the Bush khoorhan (*Otis ruficrista*) is found, and nearly everywhere in the open grass countries the Vaal khoorhan (*Otis scolopacea*) and the white-quilled black khoorhan (*Otis Afroides*), may be met with, the latter frequenting also the open bush lands, and sometimes even dense bush; but his is a thirsty soul, that must needs find water close at hand. It is really the same bird, with slight variations, due no doubt to food and climate, as the Black khoorhan (*Otis Afra*), the commonest bustard south of Orange River, whose habitat may be roughly described as extending from the river to the centre of the Transvaal, and westward to Bechuanaland. The males of both these khoorhans are far more numerous than the females. One may see fifteen or twenty cocks to one hen, but this of course is no criterion of their relative numbers; for while the cock bird habitually betrays his presence on the approach of man, the shy and retiring disposition of the hen leads her to keep herself as much out of sight as possible, and consequently she is seldom shot. But these and other khoorhans I shall describe more particularly as I obtain them.

And first the Blue khoorhan (*Otis coerulescens*), a most lovely species frequenting the open high veldt of the Lower Transvaal and the Free State, and sparsely scattered in Cape Colony and Natal. Happy is he who has shot this bird and now holds it in his hand. He cannot fail to be struck with the exquisite beauty of its plumage, a harmony of red and brown above, in fine contrast with the rich slaty-blue below, the legs a fine chrome-yellow, and the head remarkable (in life) for the delicate intermingling of blue, black, and white. It is commonly met with in larger troops than any other species, and is more tame and unsuspicious. Very amusing is it to watch their proceedings when suddenly alarmed. Lowering their heads in the peculiar way I have endeavoured to illustrate, they scurry along the ground nearly as fast as a man can run, and only when they find it impossible to escape by this means do they rise into the air, shrieking out in chorus against the cruelty of their oppressors.

Very differently does the Vaal khoorhan behave under similar circumstances. A squatted covey, taken by surprise, will often rise singly or in pairs, like a "broken" covey of partridges. Their flight, too, is so different from that of the Blue khoorhans that the sportsman soon learns to distinguish them at a distance when on the wing—at times a matter of importance, as saving him a wearisome tramp after game that he either does not want or is not likely to get near enough to shoot. For, unlike the Blue khoorhan, who by a little skilful manœuvring can generally be got to "squat," the Vaal species are always on the alert, and so often rise out of shot, that one's love for the bird is not always requited by possession. The calls of the two species are so much alike that (as they say in Yorkshire) "one can hardly tell t'other from which"; but see them as they are alighting on the ground, and you will not fail to recognise the difference. The Blue khoorhans flutter gently to the earth in a vertical line—one bird following another—and generally settle close together, whereas the Vaal khoorhans take a zig-zag course, something like the letter N, and then scatter and settle independently, each bird following his own fancy as to where he may alight. The flight of the two species is also distinctly different, that of the Blue khoorhan being steady and direct, while the Vaal khoorhan delights to play about in the air before taking headers to the ground.

These Vaal khoorhans are the commonest bustards in the country, and are met with even as far north as the Zoutpansberg Mountains. They love the open grass lands, and veldt sparsely covered with mimosa bush, and in the neighbourhood of a river you may see them playing together like children of the air, accompanying their gyrations with wild music of the anserine sort. The Dutch are hardly complimentary to the bird. They call him "Dikkop"[1] (Thick-head), from his appearance when wounded, the feathers of his head and neck standing out then in unbecoming fashion. But he is a beautiful bird for all that; the upper parts of the neck and back a rich reddish brown with numerous black markings; head black, with a blue-grey border round the crown; back of bird and chin black (and, in old males, a soft French grey in front of the neck) and elsewhere an exquisite flush of rosy pink that extends right under his body. Unlike the Blue khoorhan, however, his colour changes rapidly after death, and within six months he hardly looks like the same bird. This is especially noticeable in those shot after the month of July. The colour goes at once, like that of two equally lovely birds of our own circumpolar world—Ross's Rosy Gull (*Larus Rossi*) and the Roseate Tern (*Sterna Rosea*).[2] As to size, they may compare with the female capercailzie, being somewhat heavier

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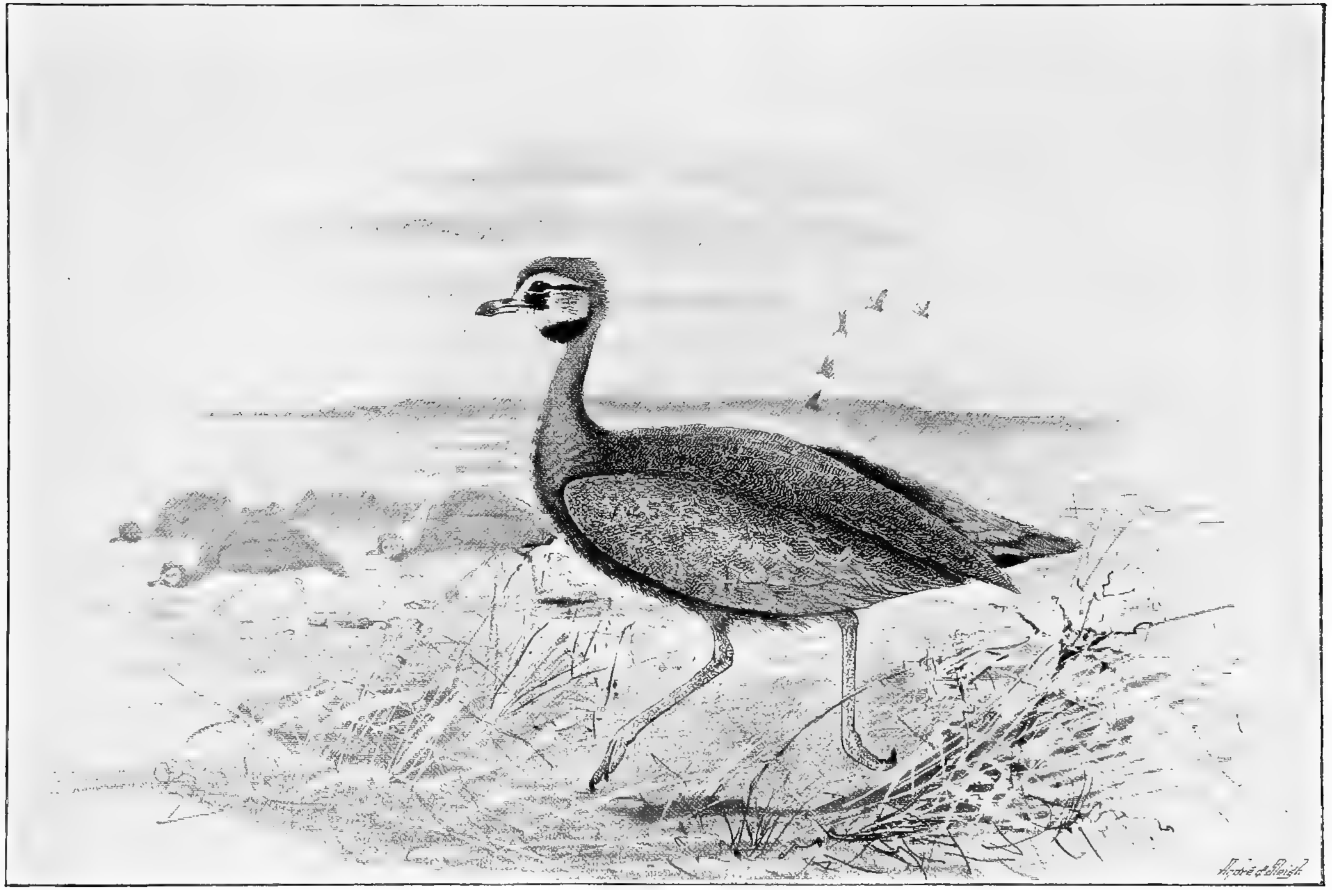
[1] Not to be confused with "Dikkop," the great Thick-knee, common throughout South Africa.

[2] On my way northwards I was at considerable trouble in preparing a large collection of francolins and bustards for my friend Mr. Ogilvie Grant of the British Museum; but, to my great disappointment, the female of this bird was the only one that escaped destruction by small beetles, only too well known in South Africa.



THE BLUE KHOORHAN

In the background will be seen the peculiar attitudes adopted by this species when retreating before man, and also the perpendicular manner in which the birds alight.

and thicker set than either of the khoorhans last referred to; and on the table they are no less palatable than any other of their species, except the Stanley bustard, whose merits on this score are simply supreme. To get at the bird you must proceed warily, and be prepared to fire long shots, armed with a first-class gun and best English-loaded wild-fowl cartridges. Then shall you have your reward; for, unlike other bustards, he is so easy to shoot when on the wing and fairly within range, that to miss him would be unpardonable in anybody calling himself a sportsman. With care therefore a troop can be gradually flushed, and the majority brought to bag.

But the finest game-bird in the country, or perhaps anywhere else, is the Kori bustard (*Otis Kori*), adult males weighing from 30 lbs. to 40 lbs. apiece. Its range is said to extend from the Karroo country (where I saw it, three times, myself) to the Zambesi; but, so far as I could learn, the birds are not anywhere abundant, and are generally met with only in pairs.

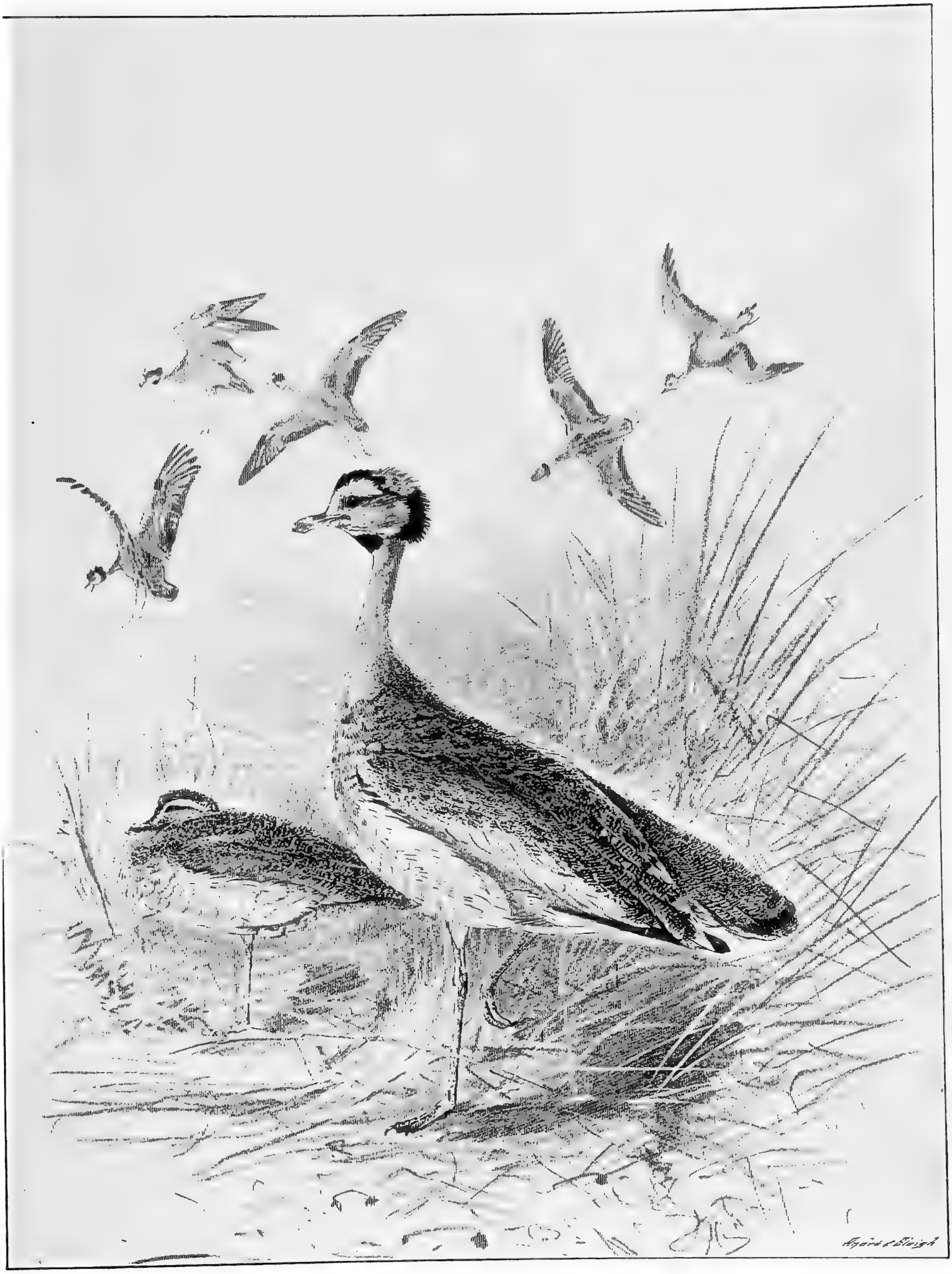
The Stanley bustard (*Otis caffra*) is a much commoner sort, and is found everywhere throughout the Southern Transvaal and Orange Free State, either singly, in pairs, or in parties of from four to eight. Messrs. Eglinton and Nicholls seem to imply that it is rarely met with in the Transvaal; but four days after leaving Johannesburg I saw it daily until we passed through the high veldt into the bush country. The hilly uplands of the grass plateaux are its favourite resort. In size it rivals the capercailzie, and as a table-bird it has no superior in South Africa, the flesh being extremely delicate and tender, especially in locust years, when its charms are heightened by abundant fat. Though a remarkably silent bird, it sometimes gives vent to a low trump as it rises, not unlike the first part of the Vaal khoorhan's note. The male, however, is said to "boom" early in the spring mornings, like other large bustards when on amorous ends intent. To get within range of them is no easy task, for to birds with thin long legs and necks the rolling prairies offer few obstacles to their vision, and the sight of a man on horseback is enough to set them off at once. Harried too, as they are, by every travelling Dutchman who carries a rifle, they take all the care they can to let no man come between the wind and their nobility.

But no more of these bustards at present. In the language of the legendary Dutchman, "Too moch is enauf." Later on I shall have something to say of what I consider a new species that I found some fifty miles north of Pietersburg in the Transvaal. Meanwhile I notice briefly, as rarely met with south of Mashonaland, four other varieties, viz. the Senegal khoorhan (*Otis*

Senegalensis), Ruppel's bustard (*Otis Ruppelli*), Ludwig's bustard (*Otis Ludwig*), and the black-bellied khoorhan (*Otis melanogaster*), the last-named bird frequenting the high plateau in the vicinity of Salisbury, and though larger than any of the khoorhans proper, resembling in its habits the Bush khoorhan, to which it is probably akin.

And now back once more to our waggon, the Boer and the boys whom I left, some pages ago, about a week's journey north of Johannesburg. The locusts were now arriving—had been coming, indeed, for some weeks past—and according to the report of natives and dwellers in the Transvaal, never before had been such a terrible locust year as this month of April opened up. Even before we reached Johannesburg we had a foretaste of their presence, being overtaken in the train by one of these great "black snowstorms," as the natives call them. They rained down upon the roofs of the carriages; and, as to the railway, one could hardly see it for the moving mass of insects, each about four inches long. Thousands came to an untimely end by passing under the wheels of the train; but these had their revenge, for their mangled remains made the rails so greasy that for the rest of the journey no more than five or six miles an hour could be got out of the engine. The roads, of course, were covered with them; so, too, was the courtyard of the hotel at which we arrived at last. Nor were they lacking in any of the apartments on the ground level. The floor of my bedroom was alive with them, like a carpet of living green, pleasant enough in point of colour, but hardly agreeable to walk upon. These locusts are, in fact, the curse of the country. Coming in clouds that sometimes even obscure the rays of the sun, they suddenly descend upon the earth and eat up every green thing for miles around, leaving the land black and bare, and the poor farmers without any forage for their cattle. Here and there a man succeeds in diverting them from their course by lighting a large fire the moment the swarm is sighted, but Boers are no match for locusts in nimbleness of movement, and many of them won't even take the trouble to collect materials for a fire, in readiness for the enemy.

It was amusing to watch these insects upon the top of the high veldt (some 7000 feet high) eastward of Johannesburg. There was a hard frost in the early morning, and they crawled about in a half-frozen and comatose condition till about 7 o'clock, when, as we were at breakfast, the rays of the sun warmed them up into a general chirp and jump and a scramble for the tops of the ant-hills or other little excrescences that offered a drier and warmer resting-place. By 11 o'clock they were as lively as ever; and having eaten all there


André & Sleigh

THE VAAL KHOORHAN

The birds alighting in the background are represented in their usual N-shaped formation.

was to get, they took to their wings in search of fresh fields and pastures new.

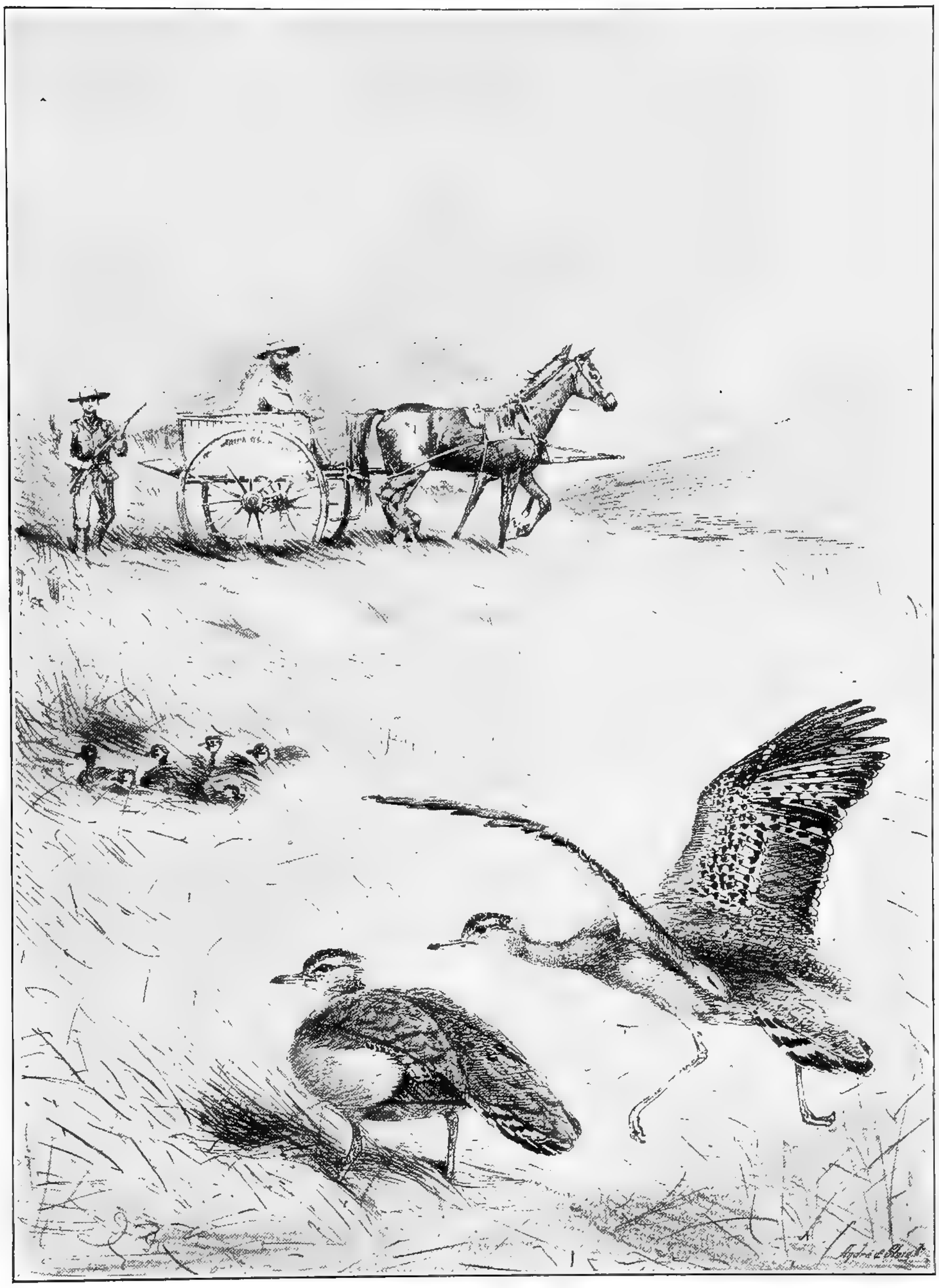
In the afternoon of April 20 we crossed the highest point of the veldt, and descended to the farm of Mr. William Bossoph, a brother-in-law of "Teenie's," who with his family gave us a hearty welcome, and entertained us most hospitably after the fashion of his country. A big man is Mr. Bossoph, over six feet in height, and somewhat slow and ponderous, as becomes the typical Dutchman; silent and good-natured withal, and a keen disciple of gun and rifle. He was about to try for some khoorhans, he said, in his shooting-cart; and being anxious to see this form of cart-shooting, I gladly accepted his kind offer of a seat. We therefore set off together, starting at a trot round the low hills in search of blue khoorhans, here carefully watched by two Kaffirs in mine host's employ, and no outside shooting being ever allowed. One of his black gamekeepers, whom we presently came across herding a flock of fine German sheep, said he had not seen any khoorhans that day, but a little later our eyes were gladdened with the sight of a troop of fifteen right in front of us. After some circuitous manœuvring we got within about thirty-five yards of them, when I jumped off the cart as it trotted along, and got two shots as the birds rose, missing the first bird clean, but killing the second, a fine old cock.

Shortly after this we came on another troop of blue khoorhans, and again Mr. Bossoph manœuvred his cart right skilfully, driving round and round the birds till we came within thirty yards of them, and by running in I shortened the distance by another ten before they rose; and was rewarded with a brace. My comrade was delighted; charmed, too, with the superiority of my gun and ammunition to the old twelve-bore with a big gas-escape and bad cartridges, to which he was accustomed. So presently, when we sighted a large bird on one of his rises, I lent him my gun and took the reins. Under his direction I worked the horses nearer and nearer to our quarry, which proved to be a fine old Stanley bustard of the male persuasion. These bustards are as a rule rather bad to get at; but, owing to the abundant supply of locusts and the fact that the ground had been long undisturbed, the bird before us was unusually tame. At the sound of our wheels he stopped feeding and looked quietly over his shoulder, as with ostrich-like gait he stalked slowly away. Then, getting within thirty yards of him, and not daring to approach another inch nearer, Mr. Bossoph descended from the cart and fired two barrels, but, alas! in vain. Stretching his beautifully pied wings to the sunshine, the huge bird floated slowly away. Dutchmen, though as a rule fine rifle-shots, are seldom at home with the shot-gun, and when they can manage it, prefer to shoot at a bird on the ground rather than on the wing. And now my friend, knowing my keen desire for a specimen of the Stanley bustard, cheered me with the prospect of the departed bird stopping in his flight before leaving the rolling hills that ended abruptly some half mile away. We had not gone far indeed before I spied, if not the same bird, one very like him feeding on a flat immediately in front of us ; and, advancing upon him as before, I at last got my shot at about forty yards, bringing him to the ground with a broken wing. In another moment he was within my grasp, the feathers of his head and neck distended in so strange a way as to expose the whole of the skin underneath.

We were decidedly in luck that evening, for on descending to a flat on the other side of the hills we came upon three more of these bustards standing together about one hundred yards away from us. Full of locusts, they were evidently composing themselves for the night, though sufficiently wakeful to notice our approach even at that distance. The two hens rose at once, and were presently followed by the cock. He alighted again however with his wives, within the boundary of the flat. And now we set out again on a circumbendibus, cruising around them at a respectful distance, and drawing nearer only by slow degrees. When at last we got within shot all the birds rose before I could get out of the cart. I managed, however, to jump off as the cock bird crossed our "bows" at about forty yards' distance, and giving him the contents of both barrels, I secured him also.

These two old cocks were the only Stanley bustards that fell to my gun, and unfortunately I had no opportunity for observing the habits of the species as I wished to do. On our way home I was lucky enough to secure another brace of blue khoorhans near my friend's house, which we reached at sundown, highly elated with our day's sport.

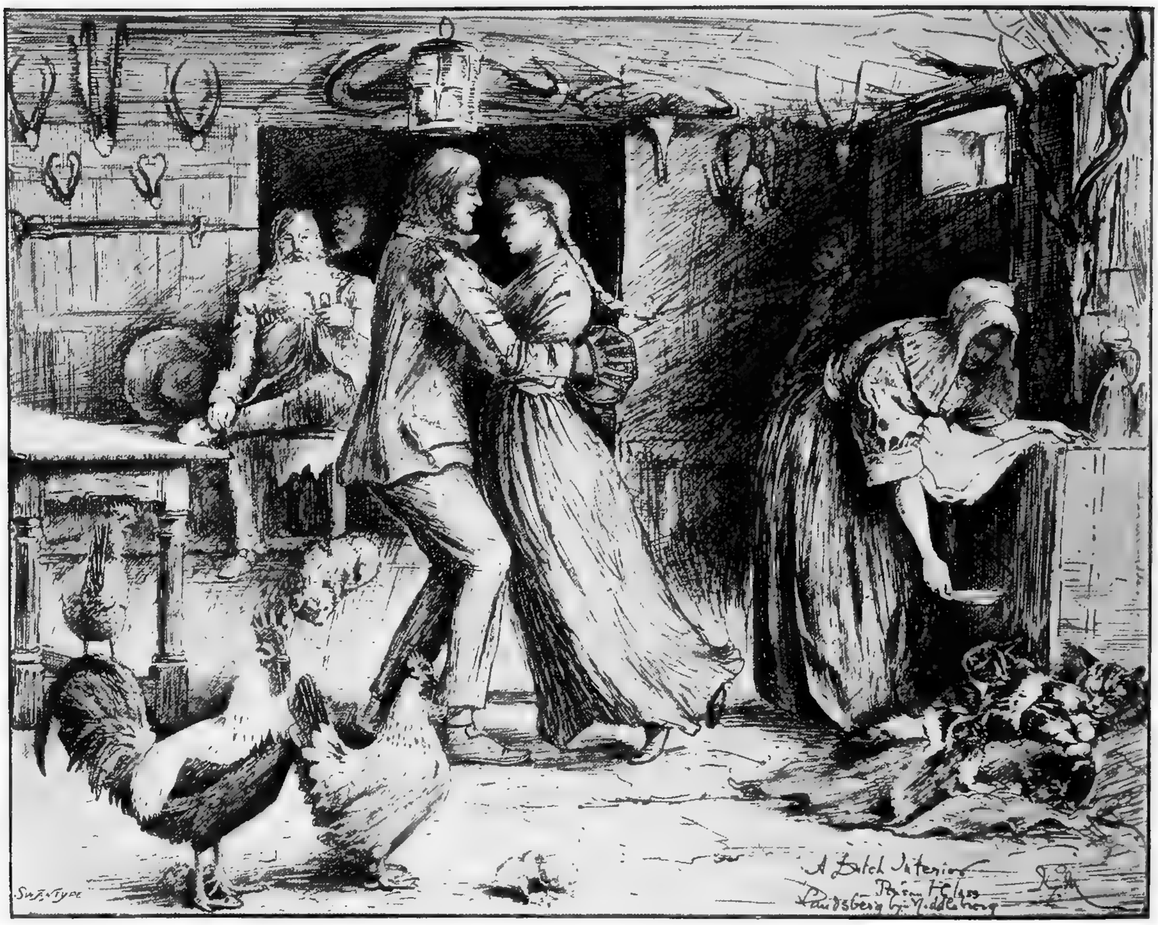
There an excellent supper awaited us, and we treated it as it deserved ; consumed, too, sundry pipes of Boer tobacco, not forgetting the once-every-hour cup of coffee (a beverage the Dutch make to perfection) ; and then, in another large room, carpeted with smoothly-laid cow-dung, I was introduced to the mysteries of the Dutch dance. The figures are much the same here as in Belgravia ; waltzes, schottisches, polkas and polka-mazurkas being quite common. But "oh, the wild charge they made," these sprightly sons of Ons-veldt, every man bent on dancing his partner to death, and—mention it not in Grosvenor Square—the lady and the gentleman alike enjoying the fun. Whilst the performance lasted it was the nearest approach to perpetual motion I have ever seen. And this was the way of it. A man with a concertina in hand and St. Vitus' dance in his right leg strikes up a tune. Every other



MODE OF SHOOTING THE STANLEY BUSTARD

The birds crouching on the ground between the gunner and the larger bustards are a covey of blue khoorhans.

man then seizes upon the girl nearest to him and whirls her about until things begin to swim, and in sheer desperation he reels up against the wall for a momentary rest. Instantly his partner slips from her moorings and is whirled off by another youth whose fit of exhaustion has either passed away or has yet to come. And so the dance goes on—waltz after waltz, polka after polka—till the "band," unable to restrain himself any longer, clasps his arms around a maiden's waist and, still clinging to his instrument and keeping up the tune as well as he can, carries her along with him in the giddy maze. The music is now a little irregular, halting or hurrying along according to the exigencies of the performer; but that is nothing. Exercise and the display of staying power, rather than rhythmic movement, are what all are bent upon, and no one thinks of giving in so long as he has breath enough left to carry him round the room. The Dutch thoroughly enjoy



A DUTCH INTERIOR—SHOWING BOERS' MODE OF DANCING these little dances; and when you come to know them and their homely ways, you too can enjoy for once in a way their fun, even though, after half an hour's dancing, the dust rises up in clouds, and the lights (amongst the poorer classes only a single candle) grow so dim that you can hardly distinguish one face from another at a three feet distance. When this happens water is brought in and sprinkled over the floor, with a result that I must leave to the imagination of my readers; for, bearing in mind what the floor was made of, I fled away to my waggon and the cool night air that blows under the cartel.

My description of a Dutch "hop" refers, of course, only to such as are common amongst the poorer classes of farmers, etc. The more affluent class—especially the *nouveaux riches*—while affecting to despise the English, take only too readily to our ways and customs, to the sacrifice of their own individuality, while lessening their interest in the eyes of the English traveller.

And now a still more novel experience awaited me. Mr. William Bossoph is one of the very few men in the Transvaal who can claim as his own a tribe of real Bosjesmen; and to my great delight, he sent for the whole colony, that I might inspect them and make a sketch of old David, their head. These little people, the lowest type of humanity, are now nearly extinct. Indeed, except some few who eke out a miserable existence on the hills round the ill-fated Majuba, it is doubtful whether there are any of the pure strain left beyond those under Mr. Bossoph's protection. Mr. Bossoph inherited old David and his six wives from his father, who captured the family in the hills near his farm, and so saved them from destruction; for in those days the "voor-trekker" Dutchmen shot them down like rabbits. Next morning, after an excellent breakfast, mine host informed me that his wild men had arrived; and there, seated against a wall, with their bright little eyes sparkling in the sun, were these strange objects patiently waiting our arrival. They were about fifteen in all, distinctly apish in appearance, and yet betraying in their faces not only intelligence but stronger emotional force than any of the native races except the Zulus. Old David could not have been much over four feet in height, and his wives were all two or three inches less. And how they did chatter, keeping up an incessant flow of clicks, like a lot of telegraph needles gone mad. Mr. Bossoph's wife and brother are, I believe, about the only outsiders who understand and speak the language perfectly, being in daily communication with the people. And now old David posed for a few minutes as my model, sitting quite still in the blazing sun, with his eyes on mine while I made the accompanying sketch.[1] He was known to be over one hundred years of age—the ages of his six wives varying from seventy to ninety years—but not a muscle did the old man move until my sketch was finished, when he put forth his claw-like hand for a solatium in the shape of tobacco. His wives were simply hideous, their funny old yellow faces, all seams and wrinkles, like nothing so much as bits of ancient parchment. One of them, at Mr. Bossoph's request, showed me her right arm, all withered below the shoulder-joint, where a bullet had entered some years ago. It was a ghastly spectacle ; but the old lady seemed rather proud of it, and chuckled continuously for several minutes when I handed her some tobacco. I was greatly interested in them all, and very sorry I could not spare time enough for drawings of the wives and some of the grandchildren whom Mr. Bossoph was training as domestic servants. I was surprised to hear from him of the love of these little creatures for our English music, and of their extraordinary delicacy of ear both as to time and tune. His two daughters, he said, were being taught music by a governess, and he frequently heard his two little "bushman" girls humming in the morning the tunes played by the governess for the first time the evening before.

At mid-day we were all ready to start once more on the main line of our expedition ; and, saying good-bye to our kind host and hostess, we resumed our journey eastwards over the high veldt. The following day (Saturday, April 22) we made two big treks to Slape-Stane Spruit, shooting on the way four blue khoorhans and a female Vaal khoorhan ; and in the evening, while riding in advance of the waggon, I noticed for the first time three Bateleur eagles, also a pair of Lammergeiers. A stray vulture or two also made their appearance high in the heavens.

Another day's trekking brought us to a fine lake, the property of Mynheer de Vet, who is said to be the richest man in these parts,—a regular old miser, who enjoys the advantage of being hated by all who know him. His house and farm overlook this fine sheet of water, on which vast numbers of wild ducks, coots, and divers disport themselves, while herds of cattle, horses, and sheep wander along the margin. In my eyes, however, the troops of blessbuck and springbuck, here carefully preserved by the owner, were the chief attraction of the place ; and as strangers are permitted to shoot them on payment of a small fee, I gladly availed myself of the privilege. The shooting is done here under cover of a trained stalking-horse, and as the practice—a novel one

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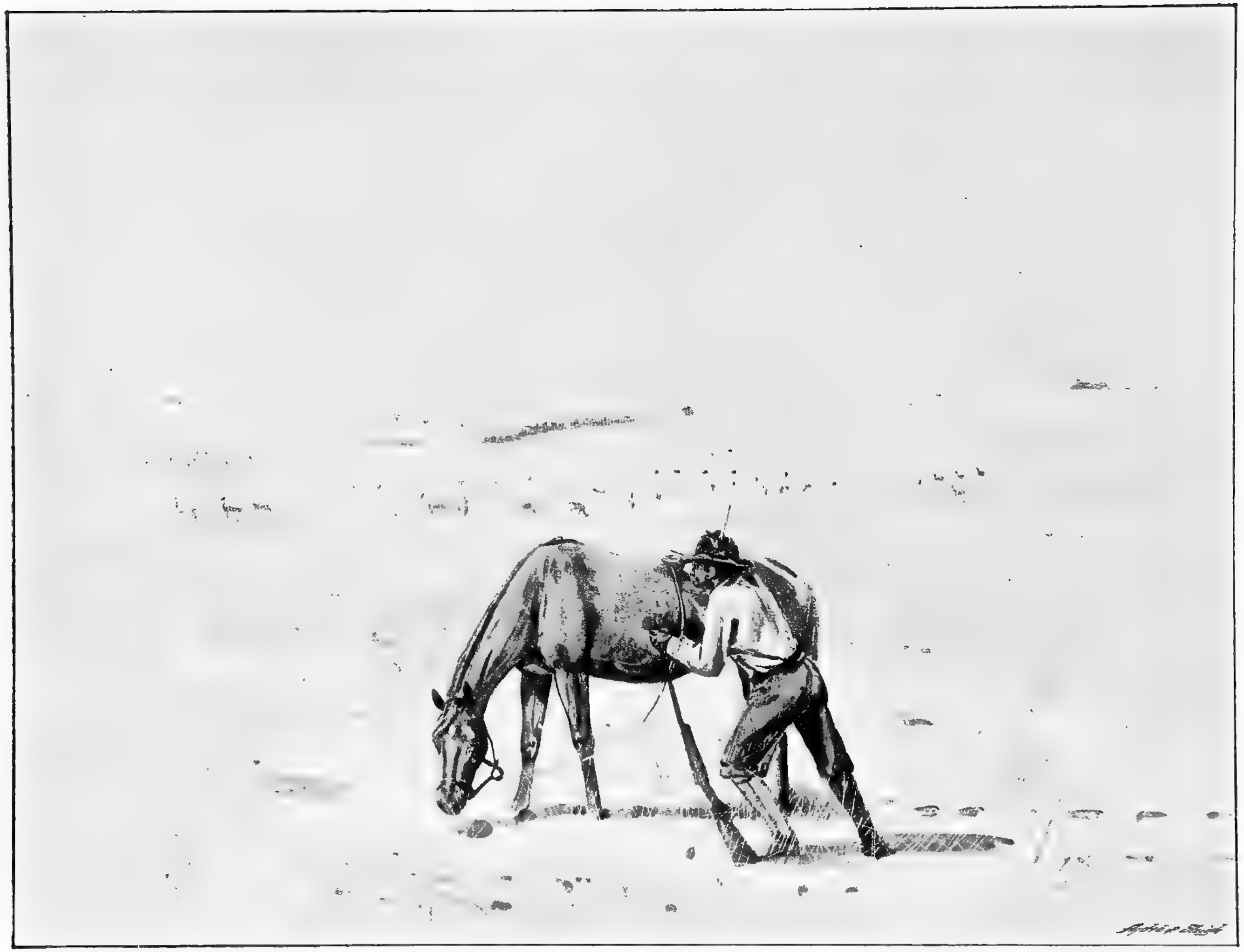
[1] See page 74.

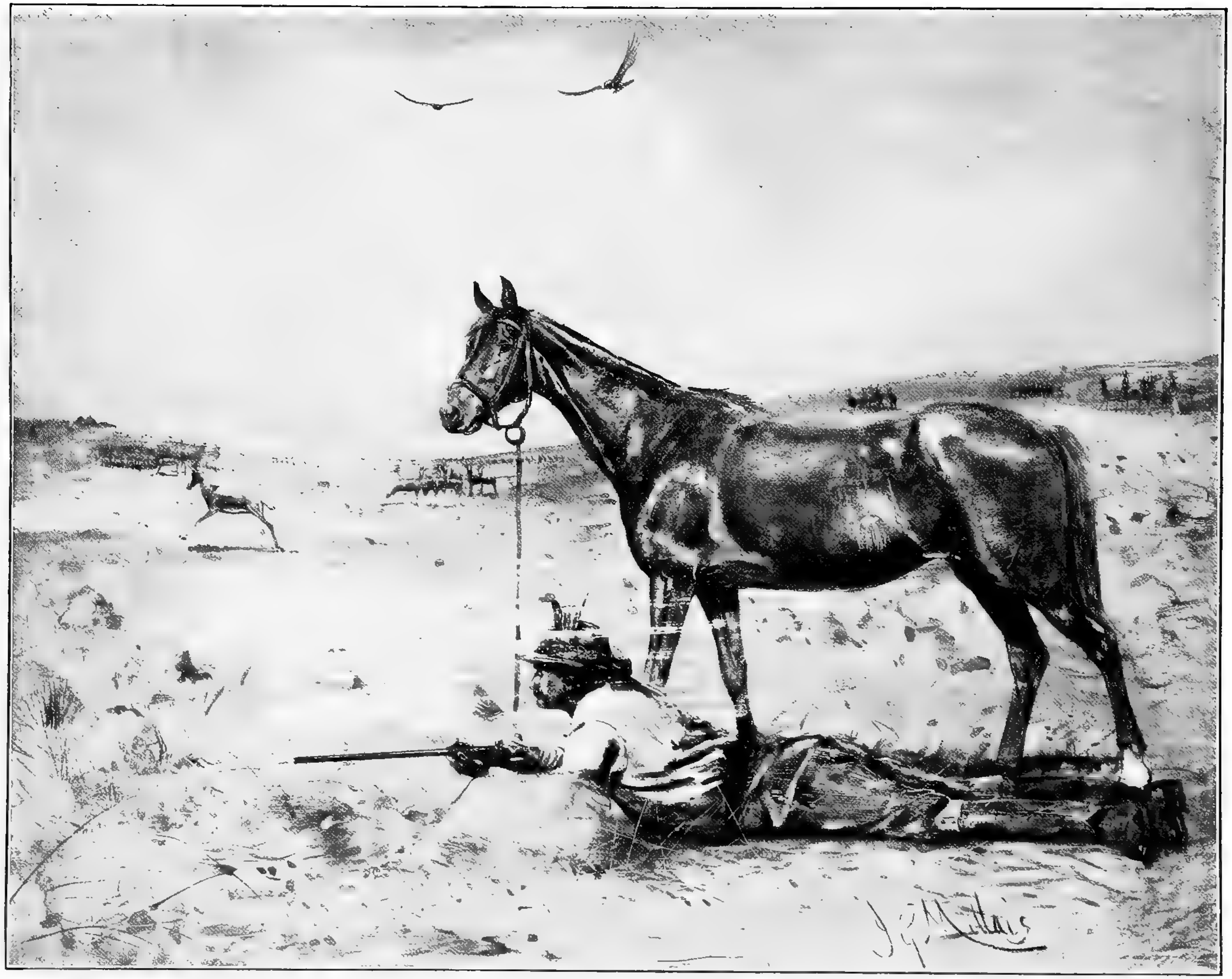


STALKING BLESSBUCK WITH A TRAINED HORSE—THE APPROACH

to me—is somewhat interesting, I shall endeavour to describe it as jotted down at the time in my diary.

Monday, 24*th April.*—A glorious morning as usual, and a really beautiful scene, after all those monotonous hills of grass. The fine lake, some 300 feet below our waggon, is choked in the middle with dense reeds, but on the open water are hundreds of Maccoa ducks (*Erismature Maccoa*), Muscovy duck, crimson-billed teal (*Dendrocygina riduata*), Cape shoveller (*Spatula capensis*), and little divers, wading, swimming, or diving; while along the margin great long-horned cattle browse on the tender shoots of aquatic plants. The wild-fowl bathed and fed quite close to me as I sat and watched them, and so fascinating was the scene that I was quite sorry when Teenie called to me from the house that young De Vet and his trained horse—a fine big, upstanding animal—were waiting for me, along with a pony which I was to ride. A ride of about half an hour brought us in sight of the main troop of blessbuck, and when we got within 800 yards of them I dismounted and began to approach them under cover of the horse, furnished only with headstall and rein. Its admirable training was at once apparent. Catching sight of the bucks the moment its head was directed towards them, it walked quietly on towards the herd, stopping every now and then to feed, but moving on again in the most unconcerned fashion when roused to a sense of its duty by a dig in the ribs from my elbow. It seemed to know, too, when and when not the stalker was properly covered whilst creeping under its flank or behind its quarters. About a quarter of an hour elapsed ere we arrived within 200 yards of the quarry, when I turned the horse's head toward two bucks standing nearest to me, at the risk of alarming some scattered animals on my left. By slow degrees we got within 120 yards of the pair, both of which proved to be old rams. Staring hard at the horse, they began to show signs of suspicion, so I determined to take my shot at once, kneeling so that I could just see over the grass, which was rather high at this spot. My bullet, I fancy, went over the buck at which I fired, as he bounded off quite happy. I then scrambled along to a large ant-hill and lay down, hoping he would make another stand within range, as he presently did about 170 yards from me. This time the bullet told loudly on his flank, and he at once separated himself from the little bunch he had joined and moved slowly away, leaving no doubt in my mind that I should get him when young De Vet came up with the horses. In a few minutes both he and Teenie came up; but to my surprise, he refused to follow the wounded animal, insisting on our going after the herd, to cut them off before they got into the "Kraal" ground, a place always retained as a sanctuary for these animals. So away we went in different directions, and after an hour's galloping backwards and forwards, with an occasional long shot, by which I got nothing, I returned somewhat hot and disappointed to my two companions, whom I found grallocking an old ewe which De Vet had just killed. When the operation was completed I expected, of course, that De Vet would help me to find my wounded buck; but not a bit of it. He gave no reason, but simply declined to listen to my proposal.

Contrary to all my experience of the Dutch, he was sulky and boorish to the last degree. But a wink from Teenie explained it all: it was not intended that we should get the animal. So back we started for the waggon, and returning to De Vet's house, I told the old man what had happened, and how sorry I was to lose a specimen I so much wanted. He assured me in reply that his son should get it for me the following day, and, foolishly enough, I accepted his word, and sent over Teenie's brother, Nelie Landsberg, with a horse and cart the following day; but the animal was not there, for young De Vet had never taken the trouble to look for it! Nelie's language on his return empty-handed—his imprecations on the heads of De Vet and his son —I refrain from recording. Enough to say, we were none of us very favourably impressed with what we saw and heard of the De Vets, and as to Teenie, his experience in former years was enough to make him hate them for ever. So we decided to trek on at once to Teenie's house, some fifty miles to the eastward, and picking up his brother Piet (a nice well-looking fellow) on the way, we reached there in a couple of days. Mrs. Landsberg welcomed us most cordially, and during the four days spent at her farm, obtaining boys, extra oxen, mealies, etc., she treated me as one of her own sons, doing everything in her power to contribute to my comfort and enjoyment. During these days of indolence—for Teenie and his brother Piet did all the work—I wandered about the edges of a large swamp and the mealie fields adjoining, looking for francolins, with an old pointer of Teenie's that he had picked up in a starving condition one dark night near Johannesburg; and a better broken or steadier old dog I have seldom seen. He attached himself to me from the first, probably not having seen a man with a gun for some time past. I had many occasions later on for using his excellent nose, his joy in hard work, and his instant obedience to word or signal. His intelligence, too, was quite extraordinary. Without any of that headstrong propensity that is so common a fault in pointers, he constantly looked round to assure himself



STALKING BLESSBUCK WITH A TRAINED HORSE—THE SHOT

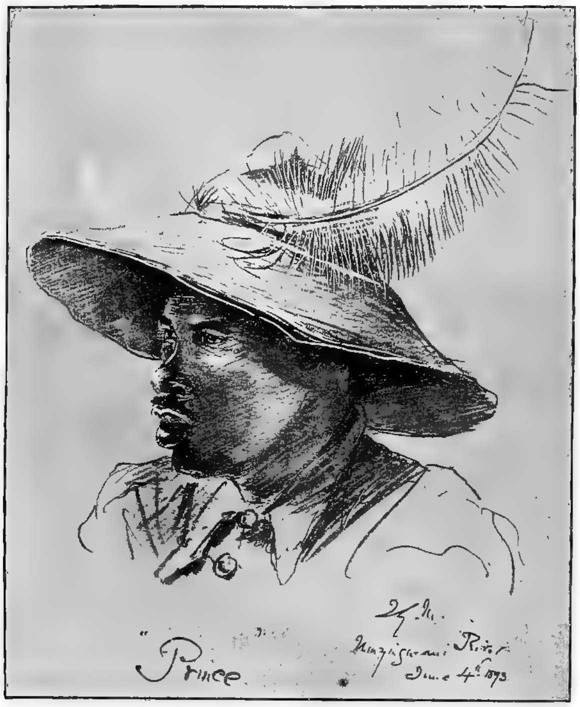
The bucks are shown in little bunches previous to massing together and departing.

that he was doing exactly what was wanted, and a sharp look or a movement of hand would bring him to heel at once. In a word, he was simply invaluable whilst trekking up through the weary Transvaal, where there was little to shoot but francolins and bustards; and with his assistance I managed to keep both waggons well supplied with these birds.

The redwing francolin (*Francolinus levaillanti*), the common game bird of the high veldt in this part of the Transvaal, is a plump little fellow about the size of our red-legged partridge, though somewhat larger about the head and neck. Coveys of from five to ten may be met with in almost any sort of ground—in bush, open grass lands, or rocky hillsides—but the surest finds are in the morning or evening, on their feeding grounds, generally patches of ground partially brought into cultivation. Their tameness is amazing, for the shot-gun is hardly ever used here. They would run along almost under the dog's nose, and only the advent of a stone or two would induce them to rise. Then they fly like partridges, and are easily killed. As table-birds they are the best of all their tribe, and are therefore much shot in Cape Colony, Natal, and the Free State.

29th April, Landsberg Farm.—Our preparations being now completed, we start for the north, hoping to pick up a Dutch hunter, named Roelef Van Staden, in the high veldt five days north of this. I have swapped "Skellum," one of my Basuto ponies, giving £10 in addition, for a little "salted" horse named Jimmy, and have bought eight donkeys, for the "fly" country, if game be not sufficiently plentiful outside. From Teenie's farm I have got two Shangan boys, named respectively "Office" and "Gentleman" (of whom more anon); also a small specimen of the Zulu breed called "Pompoom," otherwise "Pumpkin"—a boy of twelve, with a perpetual smile, that makes him look all head and teeth, and a voice of extraordinary power for one so young, as you presently find out when he is urging on the oxen with yell and shriek. "Bale Denten" (chopper-teeth) is the nickname by which he is known; and the two Shangans take care to remind him of it when they are not disposed to be gracious. As to clothes, his equipment can hardly be called extravagant. In the heat of the day his one garment consists of a huge pair of pantaloons, reaching up to his armpits and supported by a single string over his left shoulder—a thing of shreds and patches, probably inherited from a remote ancestor—and to this is added, in the early morning and at nightfall, a sack with three holes in it, through which his head and arms are thrust. The get-up is perhaps not exactly to our little friend's taste, but for all that he carries himself bravely under it, with now and then a gleam of embarrassment most amusing to witness.

A Hottentot named Prince is said to be the best driver hereabouts, and for the last two or three days I have been trying to secure his services as waggon-driver and handy-man; but I fear I shall not succeed, as his master, an old Dutch farmer living some ten miles away, refuses to let him come. Piet has been over twice as ambassador between us, but as his heart is given to the farmer's daughter, he probably thinks more of her than of his special mission. However, he swears he will bring Prince back with him this time, if he has to kidnap him.



It is a desolate place this—all bare grass—and the silence is broken only by the soothing lilt of a little bush shrike, the only bird here that appears to have any song. Enteric fever is all around; hardly a house without one or more inmates stricken down. A young man named Randsberg, who was here to-day, lives in constant dread of it, as well he may do, for his home, three miles away, is right in the middle of a miasmatic swamp in which I was shooting francolins yesterday; and only three weeks ago his father and mother and three Zulu boys all died of it. He seems to think there is no hope for any one this spring.[1]

Monday, 1st May.—We left Teenie's on Saturday, our party consisting of Teenie and Piet Landsberg, Pompoom, Office, Gentleman, and myself—Office and Gentleman being in charge of the donkeys and the oxen. As the driver of a waggon and sixteen oxen Pompoom is simply a marvel of activity, his legs and arms and tongue being kept hard at work all the day long. He comports himself, too, with considerable dignity, and openly shows his contempt for the two big Shangans, whom he considers low caste, and treats accordingly. Between him and them insults of the grossest character are not infrequent, but his dirty little face wears always the same good-natured smile, whether he is knocking the stuffing out of "Englishman,"[1] the big hindmost ox, or adding a little sand to Office's carefully prepared mealies. Though extremely dirty in his personal habits, he carefully abstains from eating out of the same pot as the Shangans. When dinner is ready, he bears away on a plate as much as he wants for himself, and then with an air of condescension leaves the rest to his humbler associates.

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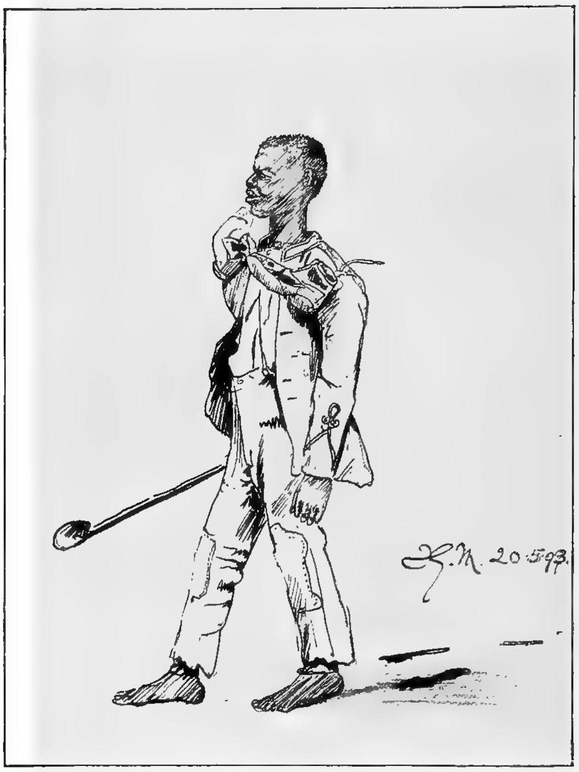
[1] A few days later poor Randsberg got the fever, and was saved only by the affectionate care of Mrs. Landsberg, who moved the whole family to her own house and nursed him through his illness. Like Eastern Mashonaland, the Eastern Transvaal is extremely unhealthy in the spring.



SHOWING THE REMARKABLE MANNER IN WHICH "GENTLEMAN" WEARS THE BOOTS I GAVE HIM

Office and Gentleman are fine specimens of the ordinary Coast Shangan from Delagoa Bay—great, strong, hulking fellows, good-natured and dirty, with a trick of assuming a good deal more stupidity than really belongs to them. Their conduct during the eight months we were together was beyond reproach; and, barring a few little peccadilloes on the part of Prince, who joined our party later on, the same may be said of all my companions on this trip. Any one who has travelled in South Africa will know how hard it is to find first-rate boys for an expedition like this, and will think, perhaps, that I struck a race of paragons; but my good fortune was really due to the Lansbergs' intimate knowledge of the "darkie" character and their tact in dealing with the natives. The boys did not like Teenie so much as they feared him, which was far better for them as well as us, as every one will understand who has had any experience with the native races. For, kindness of the wishy-washy sort, and most of all the "dusky brethren" business that we hear so much of at mission teas, though all very well in the abstract, will not bear too strict a translation into practice. Give a Kaffir justice, sternness, and a full stomach, and he will work well and respect you into the bargain;

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[1] This is the name always given by the Boers to a heavy, good-for-nothing lazy ox; conveying in a word, I suppose, their ideal of the English character.

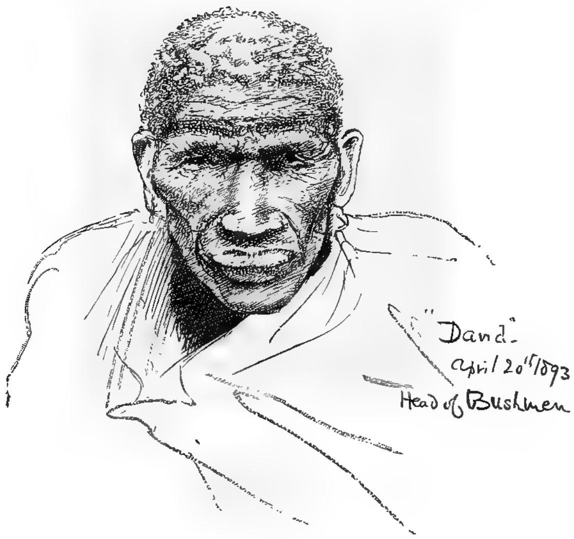
but treat him as a friend and an equal, and he will simply laugh at you, as a fool with whom he can take all sorts of liberties. In fact, so far as my small experience goes, the black man is by no means the equal of the white, and in contact with European races he is happy only when in the position of a well-treated servant. The sense of smell, too, prevents any intimate association between the two races. It is a big shock—though one has to stand it now and then—to find yourself on the lee side of a darkie, and equally true it is that we ourselves, when hot and excited, are similarly objectionable to the nose of a Kaffir. It is for that reason that many Zulus refuse to enter a white man's dwelling. Office and Gentleman are two fine specimens of their race, which is properly that of Gungunani's Shangans, now settled north-east of the Lundi River in Eastern Mashonaland.

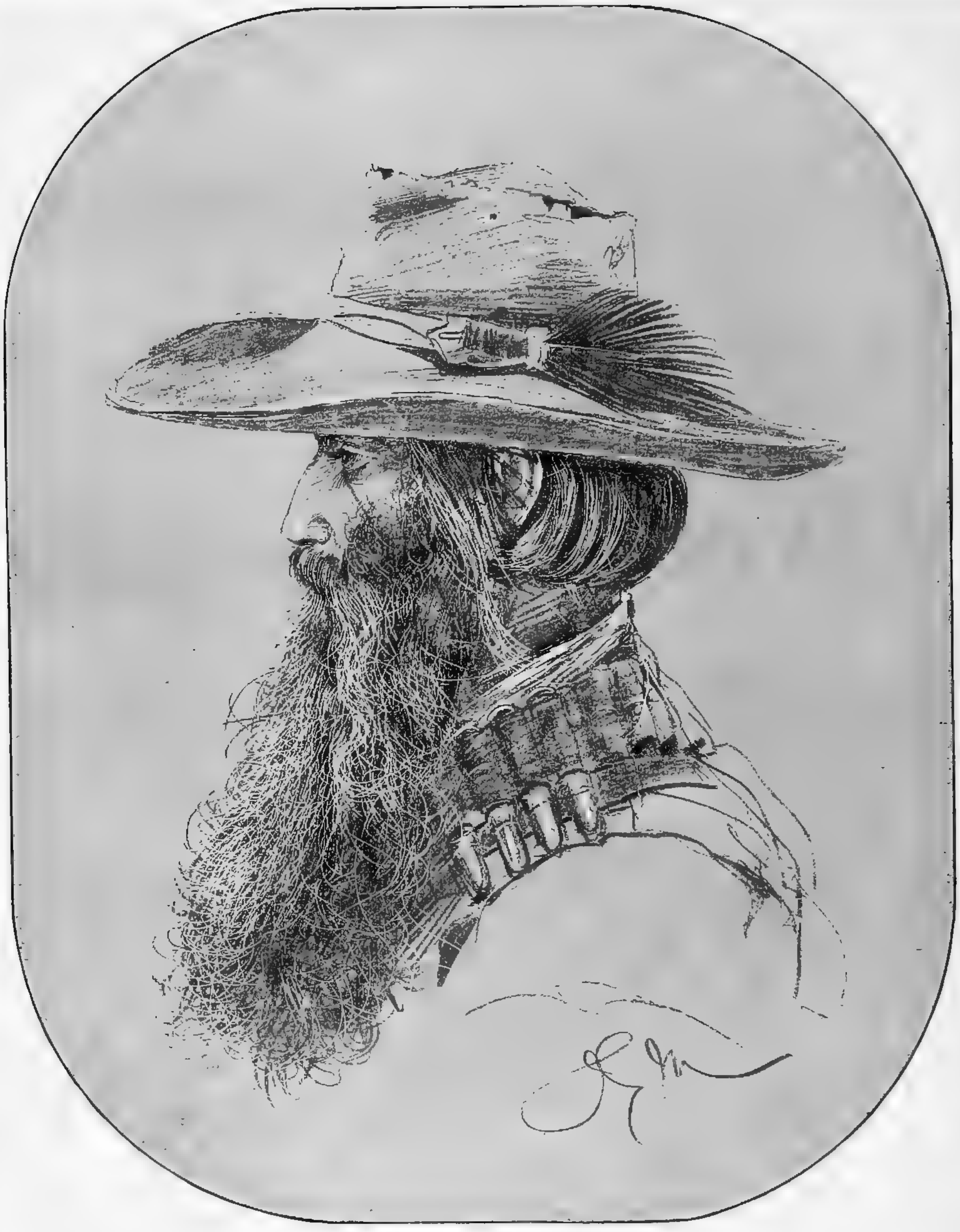
Piet has come back just as I feared, having been more successful in the good-bye business with his best girl than in the capture of Prince, who had gone away to a Hottentot wedding with intent to get genteelly drunk. So Teenie is now off on one of my ponies, with another in the string, to catch the roysterer and bring him in, his master graciously consenting to his being kidnapped.

And now, after two days' absence, the two return together, Teenie and his captive, the latter with much sign of jollification about him—a Bacchanalian smile on his face, and two big bottles of gin protruding from his pockets. Let me describe him. He is of the ordinary Hottentot type, age twenty-seven, short and thickset, with large spreading nostrils, beautiful teeth, and yellow skin. Like all "Totties," as they are called, he is a great lover of animals and a fair cook. His chief distinction is his remarkable skill as a waggon-driver, and here I may say how much I was indebted to it in later days. He made every ox in the team do its fair share of the work, simply by calling out its name and cracking his great ox-whip ; and when I say that we accomplished our long journey without losing an ox or even off-loading our waggon, it will be understood, I think, that he thoroughly justified his reputation. In temperament gay as a lark, even under the teetotal discipline to which he was perforce subjected during our march, there was yet in his smile an element of cunning characteristic of his race ; and dear to his heart was the chance of making mischief out of any words he happened to overhear between myself and any Englishman I happened to meet. At times, too, on a moonlight night, he was as queer as a wild cat. Climbing up on the waggon, he would pour forth a series of melancholy Dutch waltzes with monotonous and sickly refrain, in the middle of which he would break off suddenly with demoniacal shrieks and laughter, ending with what he considered his masterpiece of the English language, "Yes, I am Prince, Prince of the Devils."

On the first of May we entered the bush veldt, which at once becomes both interesting and beautiful, the country changing suddenly from the weary and monotonous uplands of grass to beautiful parks of fine trees and bush surrounded on all sides with lovely blue mountains. This practically continues, with one interruption in the form of the high veldt, for two days north of Pietersburg, right to the Limpopo, and though the country is ill-watered, the presence of trees, birds, little bucks, and distant blue ranges of hills serve to make the journey interesting to the traveller who sees it for the first time. The descent into the bush veldt was most picturesque, being a sheer drop down the mountain side of 800 to 1000 feet. The road, if it may be so called, is the very worst in existence, being nothing but a series of loose rocks and boulders, down which the waggon with wheels tied simply fell. We found out afterwards that this road is seldom used by waggoners, being regarded as almost impassable, a road round "Rhinaster-Kop," some twenty miles westward, being preferred. My waggon being very strong, and having been lately done up, passed through the ordeal all right, but Teenie's did not come off so well, the langwaggon being smashed, and the pole of the after axle being broken in two. This necessitated repairs, and I had to wait for three days whilst the broken waggon was sent to Rhinaster-Kop to be put right. This delay was rather galling. On the 3rd we got off again, and had some difficulty in crossing the Wilgah River, having to double span—that is, to fasten both spans of oxen, in all thirty-two, to each waggon separately—to get through the river, the sand being up to the axles, and the water pretty heavy. During the afternoon we crossed a nasty series of broken sandpits, and in one particularly bad place which my waggon narrowly escaped, Teenie's waggon following closely behind turned completely over, Piet and the whole of its contents being deposited on the veldt. Luckily nothing was smashed, though it caused some delay, and we continued our journey till far into the night. Next morning, riding off the track, I had pretty good sport with the birds, getting six Vaal khoorhans and four red-wing francolins.

About mid-day a horseman came riding towards us, and saluted Piet and Teenie, who were riding some distance from me. This proved to be "Hert" (pronounced, "Shert") Knell, the stepson of Roelef van Staden. He was a fine, big, strong fellow, with a good-natured face, and I afterwards got to like him very much. In mind he was about fifteen, and in body he looked about twenty-eight, though, as a matter of fact, he had just passed his twentieth birthday. He said he had been sent back to look for us, and that his father, who was some fifteen miles off, was anxiously awaiting our coming. Soon after our meeting we had a good dinner off the khoorhans and francolins, and at sundown reached a very beautiful, park-like forest, where, close to a fine stream of water, stood the two waggons of the old hunter, the fine blue smoke from the wood fires curling gracefully heavenwards in the evening glow. The scene of the camp, with its horses, cows, oxen, dogs, cats, and poultry, presented one of the most picturesque compositions I have ever seen, tinctured as it was with the glamour of romance and memories of days gone by. Here was the embodiment of simplicity and incertitude that clings like a halo round the wild life of the African hunter, the joys of which the mere dwellers in cities can never know. Weariness, hunger, thirst and danger are the constant companions of him whose life is passed amongst the wild beasts of the field ; but against these must be set off the cheering presence of wife and children, vigorous good health, and the joy of freedom—the three best gifts of God to man.



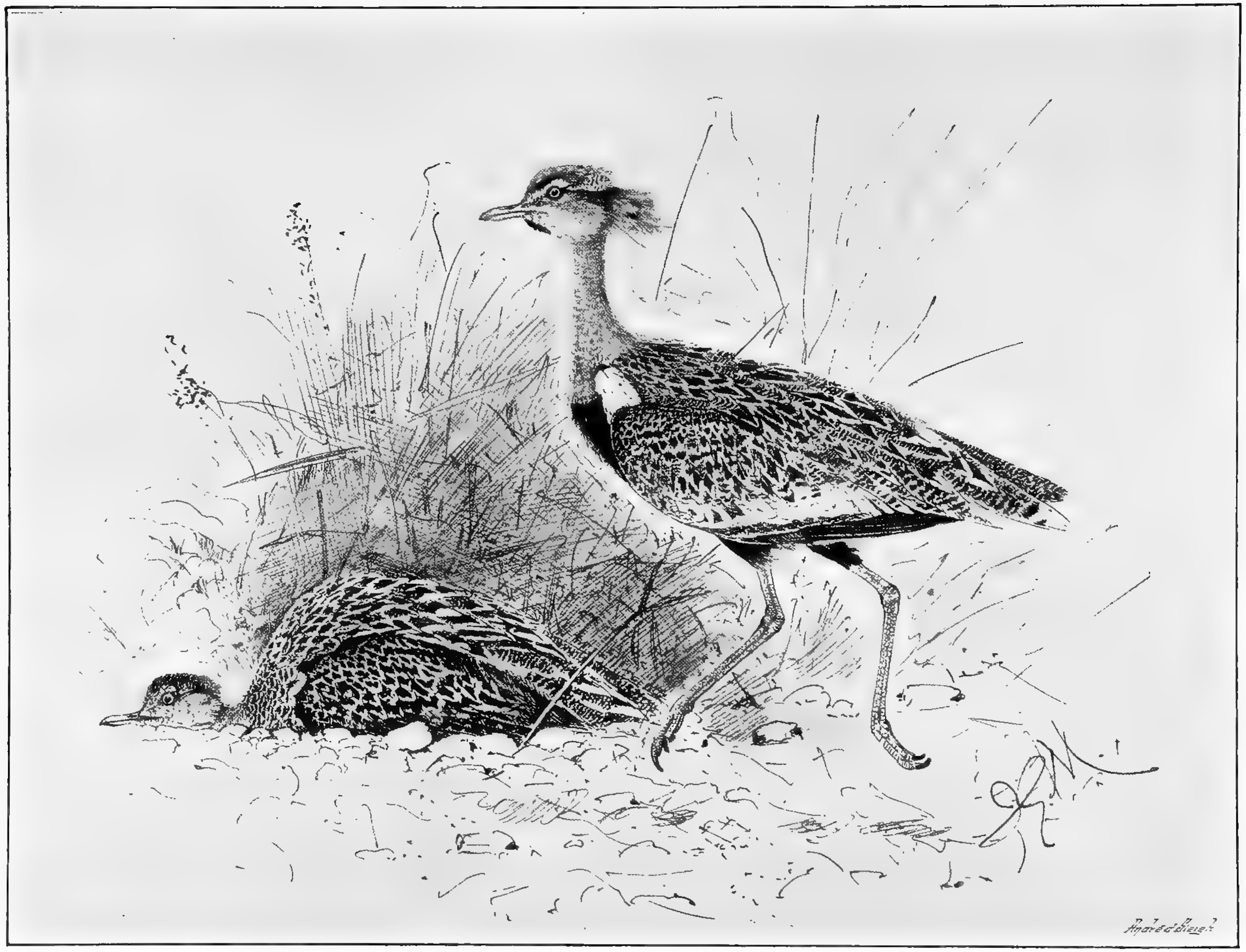


ROELEF VAN STADEN

CHAPTER IV

I MUST now introduce my readers to another character, Roelef van Staden by name, or "Oom Roelef," as his juniors were in the habit of calling him. While Teenie and I were smoking our pipes after supper one evening, he came over to our waggon on his return from rhebuck shooting. From the moment I saw him I felt that here was the very man I wanted to complete my party, and I lost no time in securing his services. Fine, well-set-up men are common enough amongst the Boers; indeed, taking them all round, it would be hard to find a more stalwart race than the Free State Dutchmen, but of all the men I came across in South Africa, Van Staden was undoubtedly the most interesting. He was forty-eight years of age, a fine manly fellow, with a face so exceptionally handsome, so refined, and so expressive, that I wished many a time that I could take him home to my father as a perfect model and type of an old African hunter. In mind and manner, too, he was equally exceptional amongst his class. When I got to know him well and speak his language, as I presently did, I found him the most delightful and sympathetic of companions. Loving nature with all his heart, and having spent his life since boyhood in the African wilds, he was a perfect fund of information on all things relating to the wild life in that country. His travels had not perhaps been so varied or so widespread as Selous', but his hunting expeditions into all parts of the interior since he was eighteen years of age had given him a familiar knowledge of the country such as few other men possessed. With no education but what the veldt and the forest had given him, the kindliness of his disposition constantly made itself felt, while there was an entire absence of that vulgar swagger and boorishness which are so often apparent in the talk and actions of inferior men, particularly amongst the Transvaal Boers. In a word, he was one of Nature's gentlemen, and as such I have great pleasure in presenting him to my readers as well as I can with pen and pencil. To complete my sketch, I may say that he was about 5 feet 10 inches in height, and straight as an arrow, his long dark brown beard and hair sprinkled with grey, and—most noticeable of all—a pair of great brown eyes, whose unfathomable depths exercised a fascinating influence on all who came in contact with him. I have never seen such eyes, or any to approach them in point of size, beauty, and clearness. At times they gave an almost theatrical expression to his face, but when they looked straight at you, you saw there was nothing of the charlatan or humbug there, but only the external sign of a sweet and kindly disposition.

From boyhood his life had been one of stirring adventure, hardship, and danger. His father, a Dutch elephant hunter, settled with his mother, a Frenchwoman, in Delagoa Bay, and here Oom Roelef was born and spent his early days. His father took annual trips of six months at a time to the neighbourhood of the Zoutpansberg, Waterberg, and Shoshong hills, where elephants and hippopotami were then plentiful, and from the tusks of the former and *sjamboks* of the latter he made his living. When he was fourteen years of age his father determined to trek with his family to the mountains of the Waterberg, so as to be nearer the hunting-ground. They had hardly, however, settled in their new home when the old hunter died of a fever contracted during the previous year. This was a terrible blow to the poor wife, who was left almost penniless in a new country, and amongst natives she could not trust. It fell therefore upon young Van Staden to do what he could for the support of himself and his mother and sister. With this view he placed himself under the guidance of a faithful native, who instructed him in veldt knowledge and all the arts of spooring, accompanying him on short trips into the bush near home. Buffalo and all the larger antelopes being then plentiful, he readily supplied his wants by his rifle—killing the animals, making "biltong" of the meat, and selling the hides to passing traders. In time, as the fascination of the sport and love of this wild and healthy life grew upon him, he took his trips farther and farther afield, learning by degrees the language of the "Vaal Pens" Kaffirs inhabiting the southern bank of the Limpopo, and shooting generally in that district. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four (except two years spent in the Mangwato territory) he visited the "fly" regularly, south and south-west of the Limpopo, generally accompanied by forty or fifty Vaal Pens, who, like himself, had to subsist on the buffalo and the great white rhinoceri that fell to his rifle. One winter he came by chance into Khama's Veldt with a crowd of these bushmen followers, nearly all of whom lost their lives by the venture. During the night they were attacked by a party of the Ba'mungwato, who slew them with their

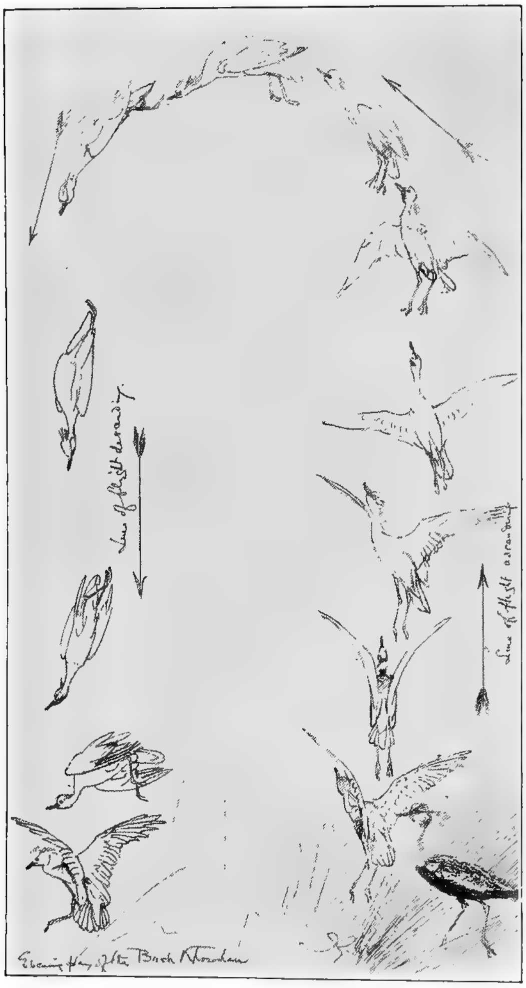


THE BUSH KHOORHAN

The figure of the female on the left is represented in the usual attitude of concealment adopted by all the khoorhans previous to rising.

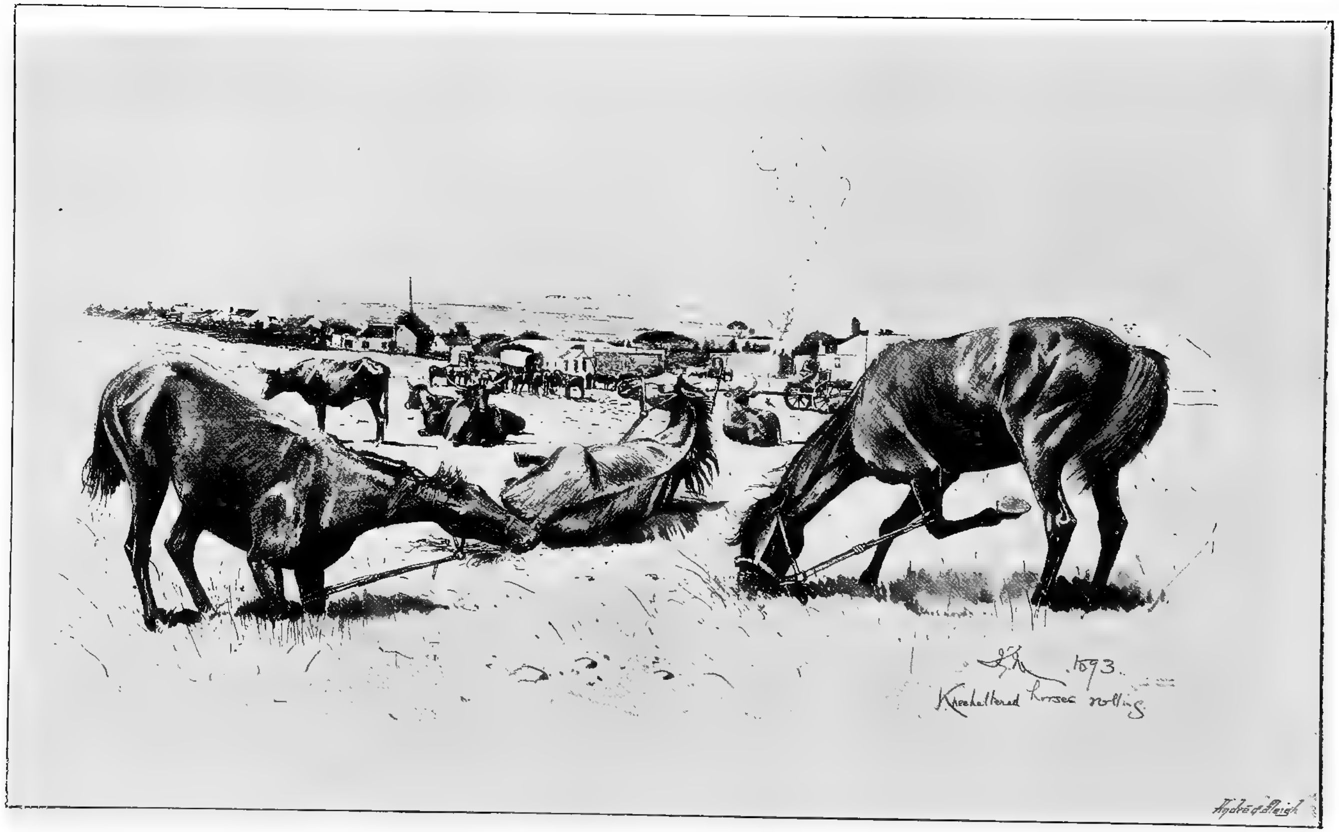
assegais—a piece of cruelty he can never forget or forgive. But then, every Dutchman hates Khama, if only because of his friendship for the English, and his refusal to allow any Boer to settle in his country. At twenty-six Van Staden married Hertina Knell, the young widow of a brother hunter, who brought to his household two sons and a daughter, and (as a set-off against this responsibility) two waggons, with some teams of oxen, some horses, cows, etc. The marriage seems to have been a particularly happy one, for though poor as rats and presently encumbered with a large family, they all pulled well together, Frau Van Staden being a good, hard-working wife ; and though at times (as has been said of a famous statesman) "carried away with the exuberance of innate verbosity," she was really a most kind-hearted woman. To provide for this family Van Staden must needs extend his range, and pursue only such animals as would bring him in the most money. These were, of course, giraffe and hippopotami, which, as the country became more and more opened up, retreated into the unhealthy lands east of the Labombo Mountains, where the last of the hippopotami unhappily fell victims to the hard necessity of my friend and his family. Ten years ago, however, a severe accident reduced poor Van Staden's activity, and permanently lowered his spirits. In an unprovoked attack by a buffalo bull, four of his ribs and both collar-bones were broken, whilst the internal injuries he received were such as to cause him considerable pain when any great demand was made upon his strength.

Now, in taking this trip into the interior, my chief object, as I explained to Van Staden, was to obtain sketches and specimens of the larger antelopes, and to study their habits. He advised therefore an expedition into the "fly" country on the south-eastern bank of the Limpopo, known to the hunters as the "Roi Rant" (Red Hill), where we could obtain all we wanted in addition to the donkeys I had brought with me. On further consideration, however, we determined to trek right through to Eastern Mashonaland, in search of the white rhinoceros, two of which, according to some half-caste hunters named Boas, came regularly to drink at a certain pool there, the previous year. The extreme rarity of the animal made me anxious to obtain, if possible, a specimen for our national Museum. Antelopes, too, were to be found there in abundance, and probably buffalo on the Nuanetsi, where Van Staden had killed nine in the previous year. So now our plans were settled, and the next day we moved off northward, the waggon and cattle following the beaten track—an excellent road leading right through the Transvaal to the Limpopo—whilst the old hunter, his two sons (Hert and Tace), and myself rode in a parallel line in the rocky hills, following in this way the method commonly employed in South Africa whenever the fleshpots have to be considered. Our hope was to pick up a Roi Rhebuck, a pretty and graceful little animal, somewhat like our English roebuck, but more closely resembling a small reedbuck, from which, however, it differs widely both in habit and activity. On the main trail to Mashonaland hardly any buck, but little duikers and steinbucks, are met with nowadays till the traveller arrives within two days of the Limpopo; the rifle therefore is of little or no use there, as far better sport can be obtained with the shot-gun and a good pointer. As a rule I found it easy to supply the larder with bustards and francolins; we therefore fared sumptuously every day on fresh meat, a very desirable commodity when living entirely in the open air. From the point from which we last started I found the bush khoorhan (*Otis ruficrista*) plentiful until we approached Mashonaland, where it gradually became scarcer. It is a handsome member of the bustard family, but, differing materially in habit from the other species, it is solitary and shy in disposition, always creeping away and hiding itself on the first appearance of danger. It is also a remarkably silent bird, seldom uttering any note except a hoarse "kirr-rack" when suddenly flushed. Its flight is swift, and much like that of the wood-cock, or still more, perhaps, that of the female capercailzie. Rising quickly and without the apparent difficulty noticeable in other members of the family, it moves away with considerable rapidity, at one time dodging behind trees and at others taking sudden headers to earth after the extraordinary fashion of this family of birds. As a bird of chase it is therefore first-class, demanding as it does quick and accurate shooting. When plentiful and found in company with the pileated



EVENING PLAY OF THE BUSH KHOORHAN

The outlined figures are intended to represent the tower and drop of a single bird.

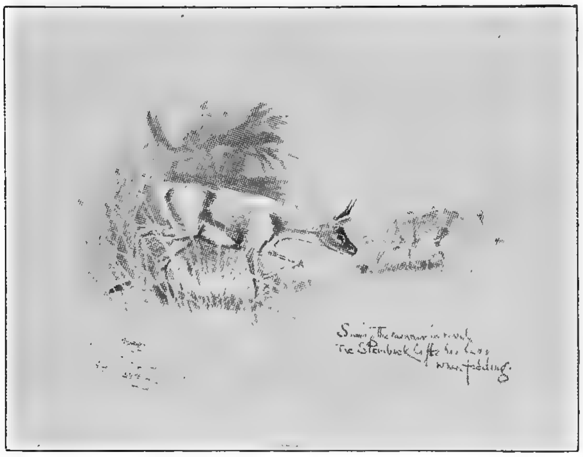

1893.
Kneehaltered horses rolling
André & Sleigh

KNEE-HALTERED HORSES ROLLING

francolin (*Francolinus pileatus*) and the little grey-winged francolin (*Francolinus afer*), most excellent sport can be obtained. Every evening as the sun approaches the horizon the bush khoorhan rises from the grass, and mounting perpendicularly into the air, to a height of from 100 to 200 feet, it closes its wings and drops head-first to earth, only opening its wings to break its fall when within a few feet of the ground—one of the most extraordinary aerial feats I have ever seen. Whether it is a form of evening sun worship or a mere " good-night " to the golden orb, I must leave my readers to determine. This peculiar habit of the bush khoorhan was of great advantage to me, for instead of tramping after the bird through miles of monotonous " wait-a-bit " and getting an occasional point from " Pointer," which never " held," I found it far easier to sit on the front of the waggon at sunset and mark the exact position of the khoorhans after towering and dropping to earth. Then, advancing rapidly upon them, I could generally get within shot. In my illustration of the khoorhans at evening play the outlines of the several figures of birds must be taken to represent the aerial course of a single specimen when engaged in these antics.

Now I must notice little Cornellis Van Staden, aged six, the youngest son of the old hunter, a miniature of the father both in body and mind, and so engaging a little monkey that I took him with me now and then on short excursions into the bush to look for khoorhan. His joy was to come with me without his " veldt schoens " (shoes), in the hope of carrying some trophy back to camp ; and not infrequently he had to pay for this amusement by a thorn in his foot, which with loud chatter and many grimaces he stopped to extract. The pain, however, was nothing by comparison with the pleasure of disobeying his father's injunctions against going shoeless, and I was amused by the way in which his father, who rather spoils him, endeavoured to enforce obedience. Producing his hunting-knife, and clipping some formidable-looking wait-a-bit and camel-doorn thorns from the nearest bushes, he pursues his little son, and throwing the thorns down in his path, compels him to tread on them until he runs to camp and obtains his shoes. The boy is now getting very wary, and as he keeps a sharp eye on his parent, the latter has only to put his hand in his pocket in search of his knife, to insure the presence of the shoes in their proper place.

Master Cornellis presently became my constant companion at breakfast, his affection, I regret to say, savouring rather of an attachment to my tins of condensed milk than to myself. Nevertheless he afforded me much amusement as a charming illustration of the funny little ways of Dutch child-life, and of the development even at this early age of his father's passion for sport. Having been three times to the hunting veldt in Mashonaland, he already knew the names and the spoor of nearly all the different animals and most of the birds; and when anything new was explained to him he never failed to remember it. One of his favourite amusements was to collect the dead khoorhans and partridges together in the shade beneath the waggon and play with them by the hour together, harnessing them with string in the form of a span of oxen; and seating himself on a big stone in place of a waggon, he affected to drive them with his hippopotamus whip. His language on such occasions was rather in advance of his age, for, in imitation of the Hottentot and Zulu boys, he swore vigorously at his "oxen," calling each of them by name, and belabouring mercilessly the hindmost one because, as beseemed its laziness, it was called "Englishman." This entertainment he varied at times by a pantomimic performance of his father's escape from the buffalo bull, with its surrounding incidents. His impersonation of the bull was really first-class—his *chef d'œuvre* in his own eyes; and being of a highly business-like turn of mind, he always made this an excuse for a little *douceur* in the shape of a couple of teaspoonfuls of condensed milk. At last the buffalo play became so frequent that if I had not put a stop to it I must soon have been reduced to a state of lacteal bankruptcy.

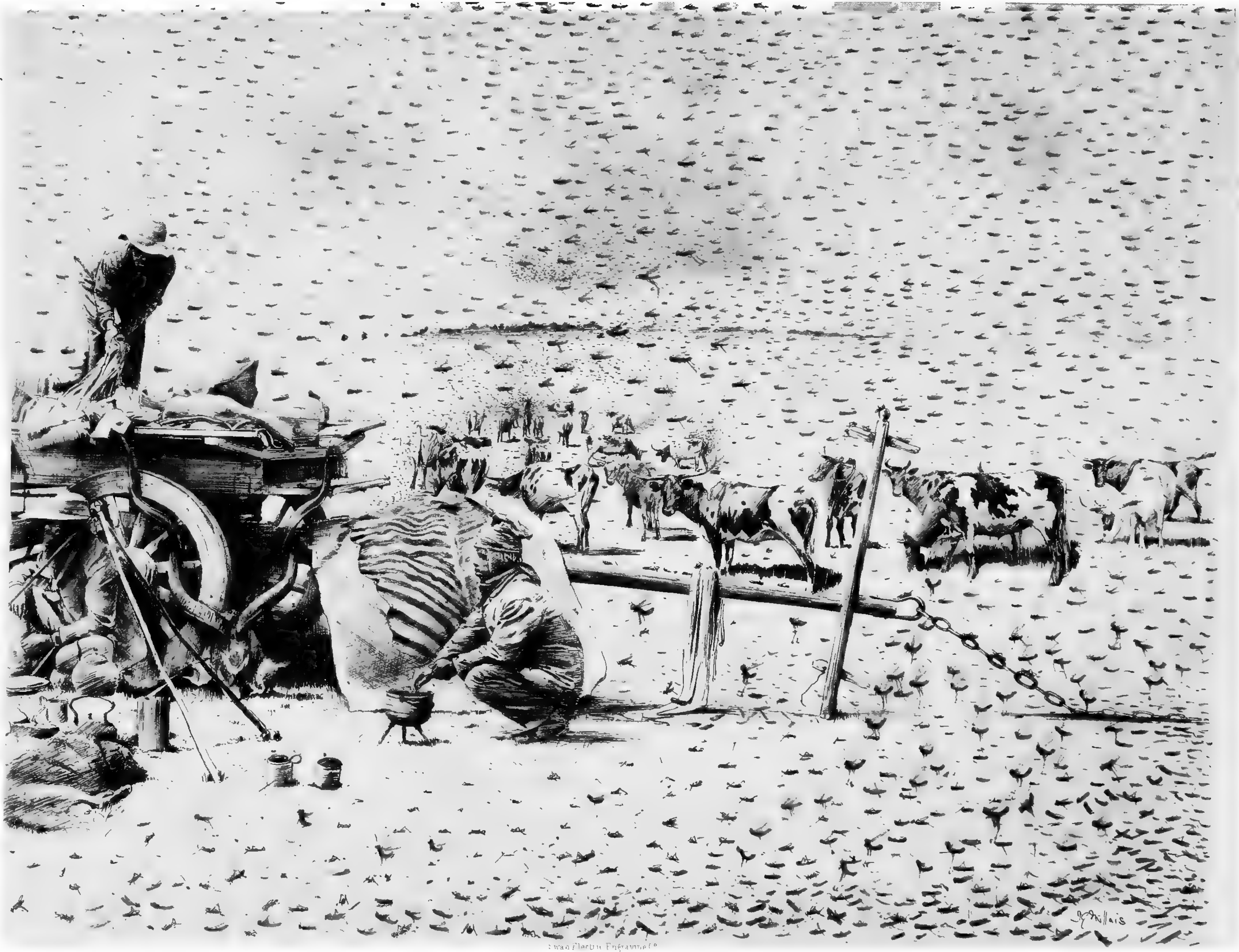

Showing the manner in which
the Steinbuck lifts his legs
when feeding.

THE ORDINARY WALK OF THE STEINBUCK

Showing the manner of lifting the legs when feeding or moving slowly.

We were now heading due north towards the Oliphants River, hoping to strike Pietersberg, the last town in the Northern Transvaal, in about a fortnight and the Zoutpansberg Mountains a week later, and to cross the Limpopo by the 1st of June, when the climate of the northern country is generally considered to be in a healthy condition. Every day we made two and sometimes three treks, amounting in all to about twenty miles; and whilst the waggon was thus proceeding I generally hunted for birds, accompanied by either the old man or Hert, whom I found to be a pleasant and agreeable companion, although at first I could understand but little that he said. On one of these days (8th

play
of



Swan Electric Engraving Co.

A Locust Storm.

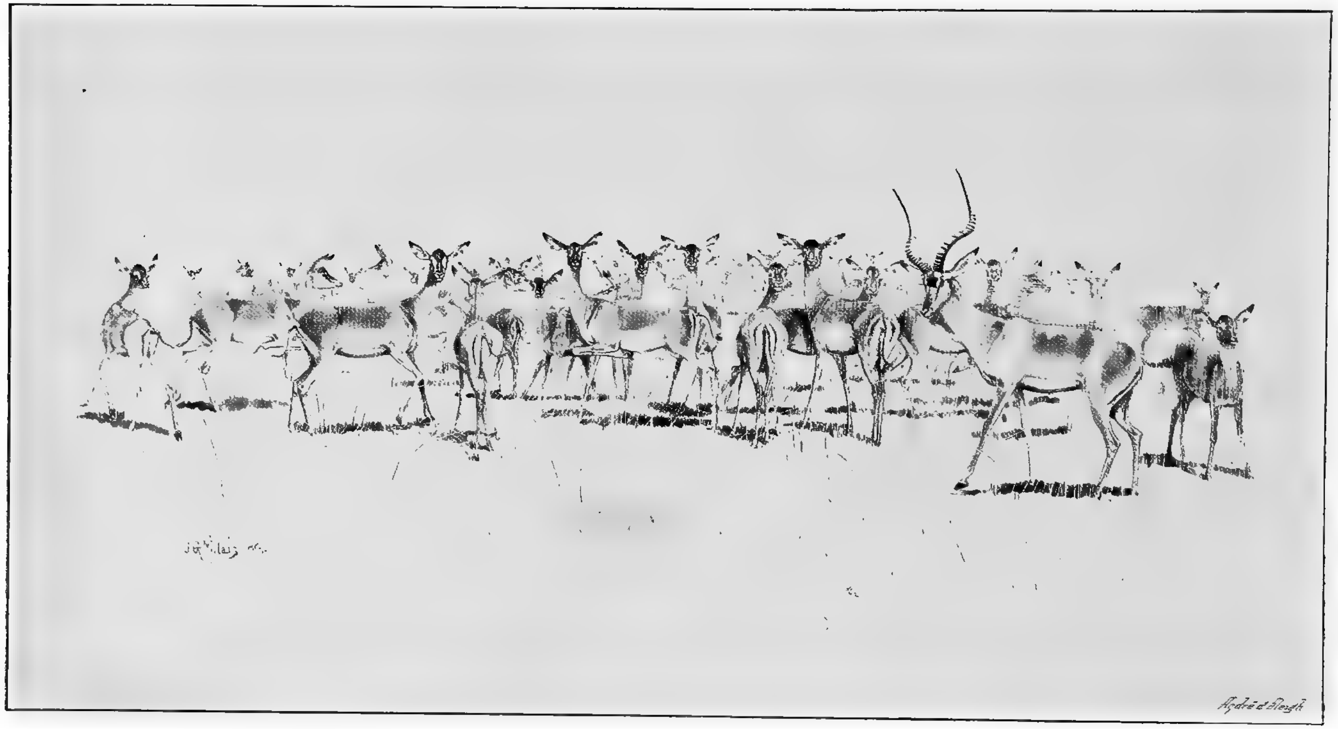
May) Hert (who always carried his rifle) and I were working some thick bush about three days south of the Oliphants River when we came across a fair amount of fresh pallah spoor as well as that of koodoo, so we naturally expected to come upon some of the former animals ; and shortly afterwards, as we were passing through some open forest of *roibosjes* (red bush), we came upon a troop of about fifteen pallah ewes, which stopped feeding and raised their heads as we approached to within 100 yards of them. Hert dismounted and fired at a big ewe on the right of the troop, and we saw at once that she was well hit, though it was some minutes before I discovered her lying dead under a tree.

The pallah (*Alpyceros melampus*) is one of the most beautiful, and certainly the most graceful of the African antelopes. To see a big troop of these bucks galloping through the sunlit glades of a tropical forest is indeed a pleasure to the artist as well as to the sportsman. Being of an unsuspicious nature, when not continually persecuted they are commonly easy to get at, and may be found either single or in large troops in the vicinity of the larger South African streams. Even to-day they are fairly plentiful from the southern bank of the Limpopo to the Zambesi, where they are said by the hunters to be the commonest species of buck. The tameness of the animal too becomes far more marked with its northward range. When found in the Transvaal, where it exists only in scattered troops, is is far more shy and difficult to shoot, generally making off at the first approach of danger, without offering the chance of a shot.

The pallah loves the vicinity of big rivers, and is seldom met with in large troops far from them, and in the early morning and late evening the hunter is fairly sure of seeing one or more herds of these bucks when in search of larger game. By the Nuanetsi I found it fairly common, and hardly a day passed without seeing one or more. At times they would stand or move tamely about, as if they understood that one's hostile attentions were directed against larger creatures than themselves. Indeed, when not often shot at they are easy enough to kill, as of all the bucks they seem most loath to take definite alarm, generally running only a short distance after the first shot and standing to look back, thus giving the hunter several good chances in succession. When in troops they will generally be found to consist of fifteen to forty ewes and one old ram, who nearly always takes up a position in the rear of the herd when retreating, the herd being always led by an old and experienced ewe, who may be seen picking her way cautiously with cocked ears, as if she knew the safety of her companions depended on her judgment and discretion. In my sketch of a troop on the move will be seen the relative positions of the animals, and the massed form in which the ewes in the centre run. Young males are generally found singly or in little parties amounting to six or seven. The pallah varies so much in size, and even in colour, in East, Central, and South-east and West Africa that, though really the same animal, the denizens of each district are regarded as distinct species.

The antelope attains to the finest size and head in the vicinity of Kilmanjaro in North-east Africa, and the smallest in Nyassaland, where it has recently been described by Consul Johnson, a very pretty little head from the latter country being stuffed and shown in our Natural History Museum at South Kensington. Possibly the very best heads of pallah killed on the southern bank of the Limpopo may compare favourably with those of Masailand ; but as a rule they are far inferior, and I fancy every year sees a deterioration in the horns of the southern form. Amongst some 150 heads I saw only one really first-class pair on the waggons of the Dutchmen. This increase in size of the heads of the pallah in their extreme northward range is very remarkable ; for as a rule, both in Southern and Central Africa, the tendency of the animal is to become smaller both in body and horn as higher latitudes are reached. The difference is hardly noticeable in the fine roan and sable antelopes, but in the case of the koodoo, the reedbuck, the bushbuck, the springbuck, the eland, the waterbuck, and the gemsbuck, it is certainly most marked. Taken on an average, the heads of koodoo bulls killed in the Transvaal, and at one time in the old Colony, are certainly finer than those of the same species in Mashonaland, whilst the horns of individuals killed in the latter country surpass those of Somaliland and Abyssinia. The reedbuck of the Transvaal is far finer than any found northwards in West Africa, as is also the waterbuck. The gemsbuck and the eland grow finer in the Kalahari than in other parts of Africa, while the springbuck of the Kalahari, Ovampoland, and the Transvaal are small by comparison with those of the Karroo in Cape Colony. The pallah, therefore, after dwindling away to almost a dwarf in Nyassaland, seems to have gained double strength in his East African home, becoming a much finer animal than his South African congener. This is the more curious, as the koodoo, whose food and general requirements are almost exactly similar, shows no difference but the general northward deterioration.

Hert and I soon grallocked the dead pallah ; and after splitting it we moved on to the outspan place agreed upon, reaching it just as "Tante" (Aunty), as we called Oom Roelef's wife, had got some of her delicious coffee ready.



PALLAH ALARMED

Nearly all European and New World people living open-air lives drink freely of coffee, but the Dutch Boers exceed all in this respect, for even when stationary at their homes coffee is generally served once in every two hours; and as every caller is expected to partake of it whether he likes it or not, the custom becomes rather trying when one is carried from one house to another in rapid succession. The Boers, however, are experts in the art of coffee-making. They buy only the best berries, and roast and grind them fresh every day, producing a very different concoction from that which Englishmen at home are too often invited to enjoy.

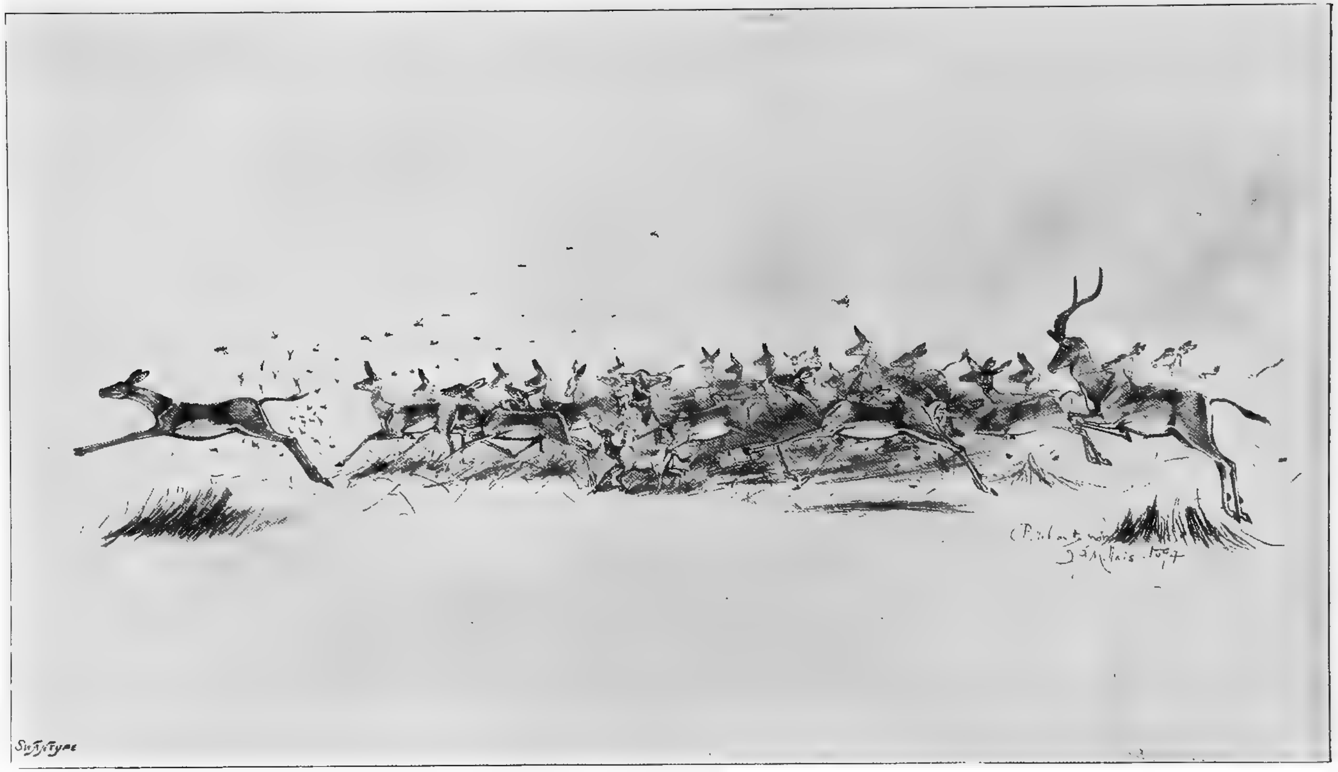
The following day we struck the Oliphants River, at its junction with Elands River, and down came the locusts thicker than ever as we outspanned for the night on the high bank above this fine stream. They had already made great havoc in the pastures, large tracks of the veldt looking as if they had been mown down close with a scythe. In the river the fish were rising at them in all directions; and having fishing material with us, Pete Landsberg and I soon had the two whipstocks rigged up to try our luck. In a short time we had caught about two dozen yellow fish, averaging about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., and one or two of the curiously-whiskered barber fish, a dull heavy creature with little or no play in it. Both these fish would be excellent eating if they would only allow one to enjoy them; but their bones are so numerous and so sharp that even a shark might think twice before tackling them a second time. Not so, however, the eels which frequent this river. They are not only far superior to any in our own country—recalling, when fried, the delicious flavour of the sole—but are by far the best fresh-water fish here, from a culinary point of view. After sundown we set fire to the great trees on the bank above, and by their light sat and fished with hand-lines for the eels, the longest running to 5 and 6 lbs. each. Needless to say how we enjoyed them after the *toujours perdrix* and khoorhan. Hert brought in in the evening two pallah, an old ram and a ewe; and Tace a young ram.

10*th May.*—Trekked on along the Oliphants, where we found plenty of pallah spoor. Tace killed another young ram; and in the evening yet another was bagged by the old man with whom I was riding, as a punishment for its tameness in allowing us to approach within forty yards. With so many buck on hand, the Dutchmen are now engaged in making "biltong" of the meat, cutting it up into big strips and then rolling in rough salt and hanging it up in the trees to dry. When travelling the meat is taken down, and hung up again at every outspan till it is thoroughly dry. Saw many hoopoes and two species of hornbills, called by the Dutchmen "bosjes craw" (bush crow).

11*th May*.—Killed three bush khoorhan and five pheasanter (?). The brown red-necked francolin (*Pternister Swainsoni*), or pheasant, as the Dutch call it, is very common here,—indeed the commonest species from here northward to Gong on the borders of Matabeleland, though eastward of that place it was remarkably scarce. It loves the water-side, where it is nearly always found in small coveys of from four to eight. The time to find it is the early morning; for the birds are then tamely engaged in scratching and feeding on all the bare spots they can find, such as the sites of old outspans and cattle kraals. On the first alarm they start up and run like cock pheasants for the nearest bush, after which they fly a short distance before finally settling to collect their forces. If then suddenly approached with a pointer they become confused and squat well, falling an easy prey to the sportsman in pursuit of small game. If, however, time be given them to collect together again, they commonly take to running, and disappear in the thick bush. In the early morning this francolin keeps up such a continuous screech that its whereabouts is not difficult to "locate," as the Yankee says; and as the neighbourhood of water is as attractive to campers-out as to them, they are the francolins that most frequently grace the hunter's pot where no large game is to be found. The legs of the old males are armed with most formidable spurs, the cause of death no doubt to many of this species during the spring battles in which all the partridges, grouse, and francolins engage.

12*th May*.—We now approached the chain of mountains behind which Pietersberg lies, and which are really a continuation of the Zoutpansberg range.

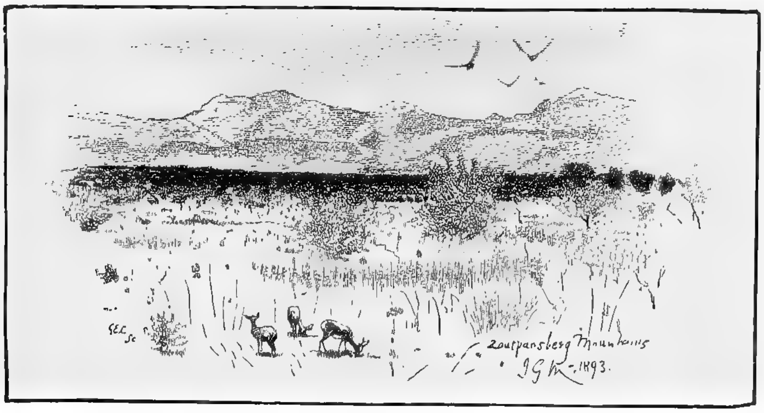
It is interesting to listen to the various sounds that herald the approaching day in South Africa, as you lie awake in your comfortable bed of karosses on the top of the waggon. The proverbial chanticleer has the first cut-in from the coop beneath the Dutchman's waggon; but it is but a feeble attempt at cheerfulness on his part. He has apparently awoke too soon, for it is still pitch dark and there seems to be nothing to warrant this obtrusion of his opinion that it is time to get up. His instinct, however, is unfailing: his calls become both louder and more frequent, and now the first faint rays of colour are seen stealing along the fringe of the eastern sky. Teenie yawns aloud from beneath the waggon, and presently we hear him cry: "Get up, Gentleman, and go and look for the oxen. Pompoon! *Pompoon*! POMPOON! get up


J G Millais 1907

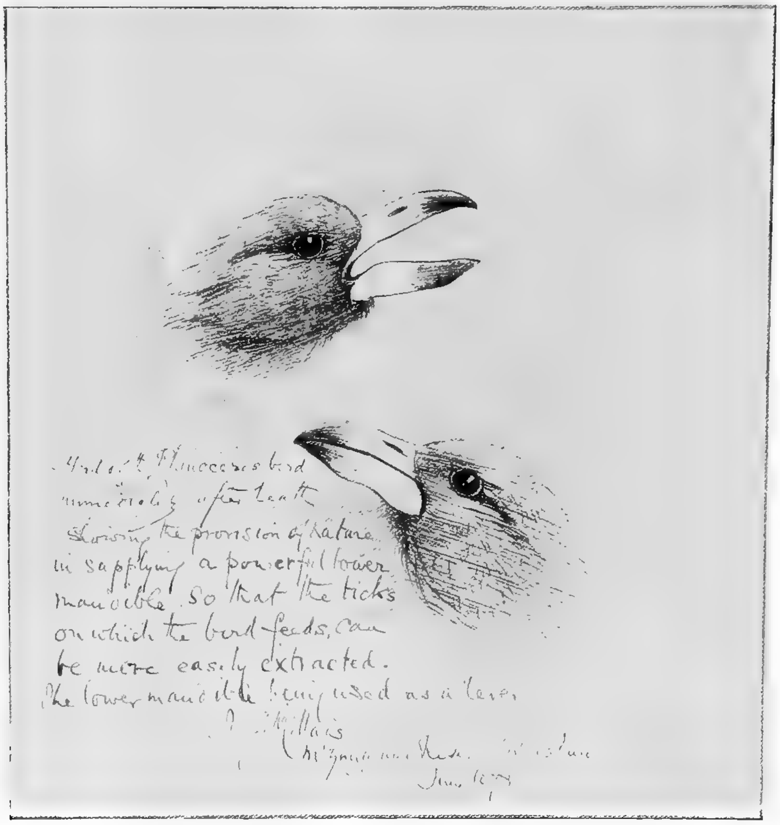
PALLAH ON THE MOVE

and make a fire!" Then comes the voice of the old man singing his morning hymn. It was generally a Gregorian chant, and not particularly beautiful, nor improved by the quavering voice in which he delivered it, but there was an old-time flavour about it that harmonised well with the devotion of the singer, and seemed to add a small iota of romance to a life that was entirely romantic. Sometimes he would at this early hour try to rouse his slumbering family to a proper sense of duty and music, but with such rare success that he generally had to do precentor and congregation himself.

Here, at the Makatese village where I write, I have a good view of the rhinoceros birds feeding on an ox. So tame were they that they allowed me to approach within thirty yards, where I sat down for an hour, and with the aid of a telescope made many sketches of them. These birds and the honey guide are the most curious of all the feathered tribe with which the traveller comes into contact while in South Africa—each in its own way amongst the marvels of creation. While speaking of them I should like to add a few notes from personal observation of the rhinoceros bird (or "rhinaster vogel," as it is called by the Dutch), which to my mind is the most interesting bird I have ever seen. In size it is about equal to our common starling, which it also resembles to some extent in habit, being fond of resting on the backs of animals, and relieving them of the tics that infest most creatures, domestic or wild, in the bush country. To aid it in these forays after insects, nature has endowed the bird with a tail of horny feathers for support, and claws of such extraordinary strength and sharpness that it can cling on securely while performing feats of acrobatism most amusing to witness. The prehensile power of the claws is, as I found by experience, so great that when a dead

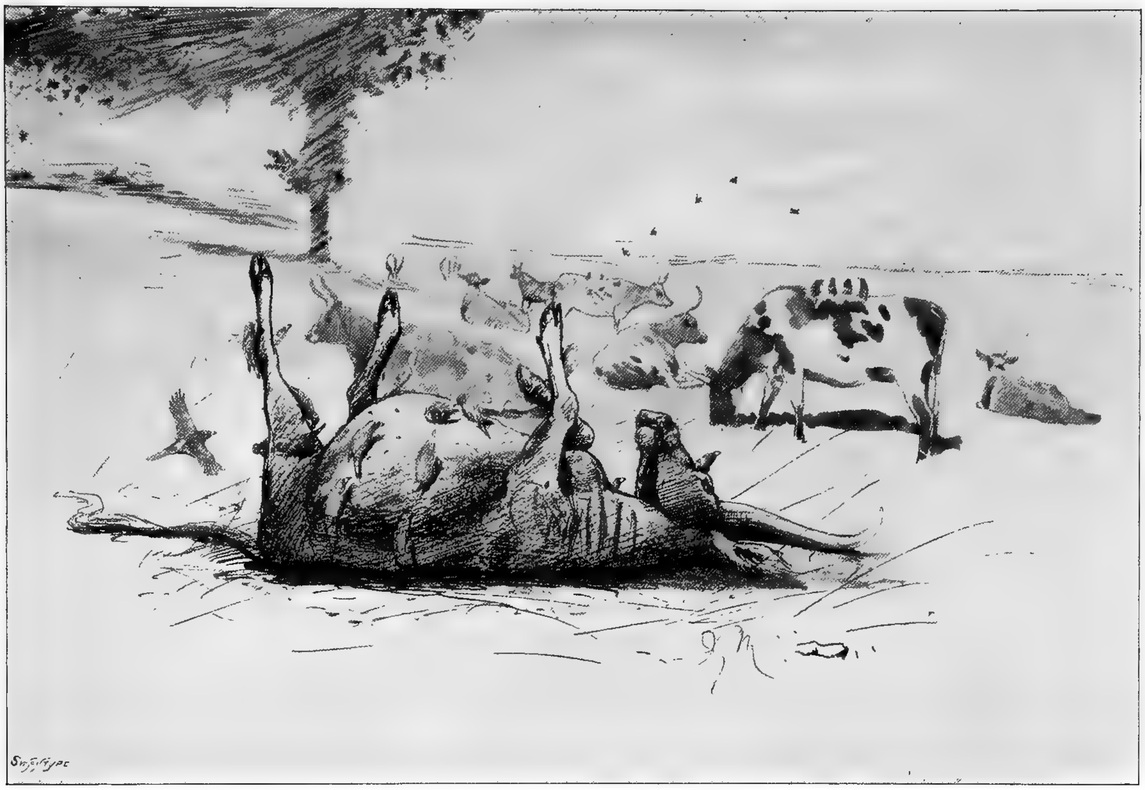


BUSH VELDT LANDSCAPE AND DISTANT VIEW OF THE ZOUTPANSBERG MOUNTAINS bird which had grown stiff was thrown on to the back or sides of an ox so that the feet touched the animal's hide, the claws held fast at once, and could not be easily withdrawn. It is most interesting to notice the way in which a party of these birds will move about on the body of a horse or ox, searching every part of his skin as they run or hop over it in the most lively fashion. At the risk of being accused of telling a traveller's yarn, I must state the fact that they can hop backwards quite as well as forwards, and they often make long drops downwards from the shoulder to the fore-leg, or down the side of the animal whose coat they are engaged upon. It is quite immaterial to them how or in what direction they move: they are continually on the hop, and seem almost capable of hanging on by the proverbial eyelids. Amongst wild beasts their attentions are chiefly devoted to the rhinoceros, the Cape buffalo, the sable antelope, and the wart-hog; whilst among the domestic animals, horses and oxen are their favourite feeding-grounds. Your oxen are no sooner outspanned than a party of these interesting birds spy them out, and come and sit on the neighbouring trees till the beasts have been watered and have settled



Head of Rhinoceros bird immediately after death showing the provision of Nature in supplying a powerful lower mandible so that the ticks on which the bird feeds, can be more easily extracted. The lower mandible being used as a lever.
J. G. Millais
[illegible]
Jan. [illegible]

down to steady grazing. Then they rise in the air, and after flying in a circle once or twice over some likely-looking ox, they descend and settle all in a row along its backbone, where they sit stolidly for a moment or two, to see if there is any fear of disturbance during their coming meal. The whole party then set to work and scour the entire body of the animal—a proceeding which the latter seems thoroughly to appreciate, for it is no uncommon sight to see an ox lying stretched out on the ground, exposing every part of his body to their administrations. When they have got all they can out of one beast they pass on to another, and repeat the process till their appetite is satisfied. Old hunters extol their gratitude for these feasts, declaring that when a rhinoceros or buffalo bull is "at home" to these visitors, the greatest precautions must be exercised in approaching the quarry, as the birds are wonderfully quick in observing the presence of a man, even at a considerable distance, and the moment they see him they shriek out an alarm, and away goes the beast. But not so when they are engaged on domestic animals. Knowing that these are safe against any



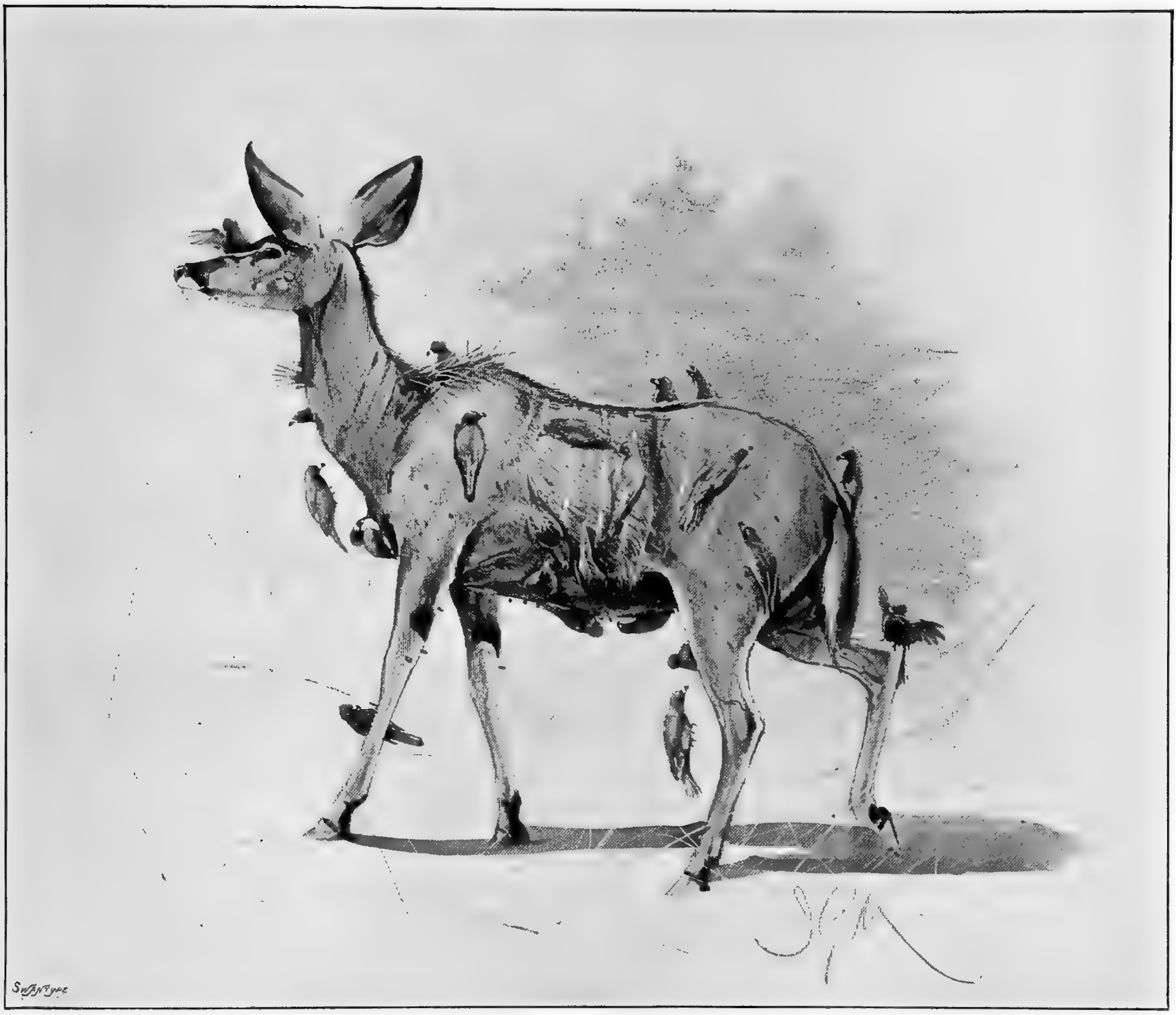
ANY SMALL ATTENTIONS THANKFULLY RECEIVED

The above is not an uncommon sight whilst trekking up country. An ox will voluntarily lie on its back and expose every portion of its body to the ministrations of its small friends.

attack, they think only of themselves, and refrain from "swearing" until the intruder is within thirty or forty yards or so. To give an instance of their tameness upon occasion, the day we left the Bubye River a rhinoceros bird alighted on "Brenke's" back just as we were starting. I was riding "Spotty," my other Basuto pony, and driving "Jimmy" and "Brenke" in front of me. As we moved on down the bank to cross the wide sandy bed of the river, I thought the bird would fly away; but not a bit of it; he had evidently "struck oil" in "Brenke," and was determined to make the most of it. So there he sat on the back of the pony as he trotted along in front of me, evincing no fear whatever, though several times he was within five yards of me. At last "Brenke's" pace became too lively for him, when he flew over our heads away back to Bubye, to join the companions he had left behind.

The flight of the rhinoceros bird closely resembles that of our own fieldfare, and its cry of alarm (a jarring swear) is almost exactly like that of the common starling when its nest is being robbed. All the birds utter it together when they wish to warn an animal of approaching danger, sitting in a line along its back and stretching their necks upwards preparatory to taking flight, as shown in my sketch. Then away they go; not all together, but following each other in a string, and after mounting some twenty yards in the air immediately above their four-legged friend, they commence a series of gyrations, accompanied by loud cries, which never fail to attract its attention. I have seen this performance only once myself on a wild animal, and that at too great a distance to judge of the effect upon the animal they were trying to arouse; it was a sable antelope, and they flew away almost as soon as they had alighted on its back.

14*th May*, *Sunday*.—It is a real pleasure to have a day's rest at the end of each week; for continuous trekking through uninteresting country becomes wearisome and monotonous in the extreme. Oom Roelef holds a service with his family and the Landsbergs, in which the "Old Hundredth" figures conspicuously in the midst of long Gregorian chants. I don't like it myself, so I generally spend the day sketching, writing, and preserving specimens of game birds. Many Makatese come to trade mealies, fowls, and Kaffir corn for salt. As a rule the men and boys have pleasant, good-natured faces; but the women are simply hideous. Prince is great at bartering, and thoroughly enjoys haggling with them. He will spend half the day in this way, for time is no object to a Kaffir, and great is his joy when he has got the best of a bargain—as he rarely does, however, when dealing with the old women. *Mem*.—If a



RHINOCEROS BIRDS FEEDING ON A KOODOO COW

The above attitudes are all drawn direct from nature. A party of these birds is seen relieving an animal of its pests. The bird in the air, close to the near hind-leg, is supposed to have dropped from the koodoo's quarters and will catch the fetlock in its descent, from whence it will gradually work up the body again.

native woman goes away swearing at you and your injustice, you may be sure you have made a fair and honest deal with her, but if she leaves quickly without resorting to strong language, you may be equally sure that she has done you.

There are many white-necked crows here. During the day they come in parties and search the great plain of the bush veldt, trekking back in the evening, in a string, to the Zoutpansberg Mountains, where they roost at night. "Tante" (Oom Roelef's wife) makes wonderful ovens by digging holes in the river bank wherein to bake her bread. She is a good old soul, and sends over to my waggon a contribution of all that she makes. Dutch cookery, however, to say the best of it, hardly agrees with English stomachs, and however hungry I may be, I find it impossible to enjoy her compositions. The fat and grease with which they are freely interlarded are particularly objectionable in a hot climate, and the dishes she sends over are none the more appetising from being chilled in transit from their waggons to my own. Still it would be fatal to my friendship with Oom and his wife if I refused their proffered gifts; so I receive them, as I am expected to do, with every manifestation of delight, feeling all the time what a miserable humbug I am, and how shocked the old lady would be if she knew what became of her presents! My Dutch companions, in return, hate the grilled partridges and khoorhans which I cook myself, designating them "raw flesh." According to Teenie, mealie meal has a marvellous fattening effect on dogs, as illustrated in the obese condition of my two pointers, though in regular work; but I rather think the rotundity of my dogs is due to some other food that, out of consideration for himself and his friends, I refrain from mentioning.

18*th May.*—We have now passed Pietersberg, the last town in the Transvaal, and are on the high veldt again, where the nights are bitterly cold. The country is more or less bare of bush, and the ant-heaps gradually become larger as we advance northward. Two days ago we caught up the De Mervelles, the Basadanotes, and Daniel Erasmus, who are amongst the few Dutch hunters who now trek every year from the Transvaal into the northern hunting-grounds; for now that the elephants are nearly gone, hunting affords but a poor and precarious mode of existence, and all these poor fellows are, like Van Staden, on the verge of beggary. They have lung-sickness amongst their oxen, so we do not camp near them, though they are travelling with us as far as the Limpopo. This morning Hert (Oom's second step-son) rode over to say good-bye to his best girl, the daughter of a hunter, and now on the eve of leaving for a hunt in the "Roi Rant." He has just returned, saying that every waggon is being turned back in front, owing to trouble with the Basuto chief "Magato," who occupies a stronghold at the point of the Zoutpansberg beneath which all have to pass; but I strongly suspect that this is only a device of Mr. Hert to induce me to turn back and go to the Roi Rant. I openly taxed him with it, raising a laugh at his expense.

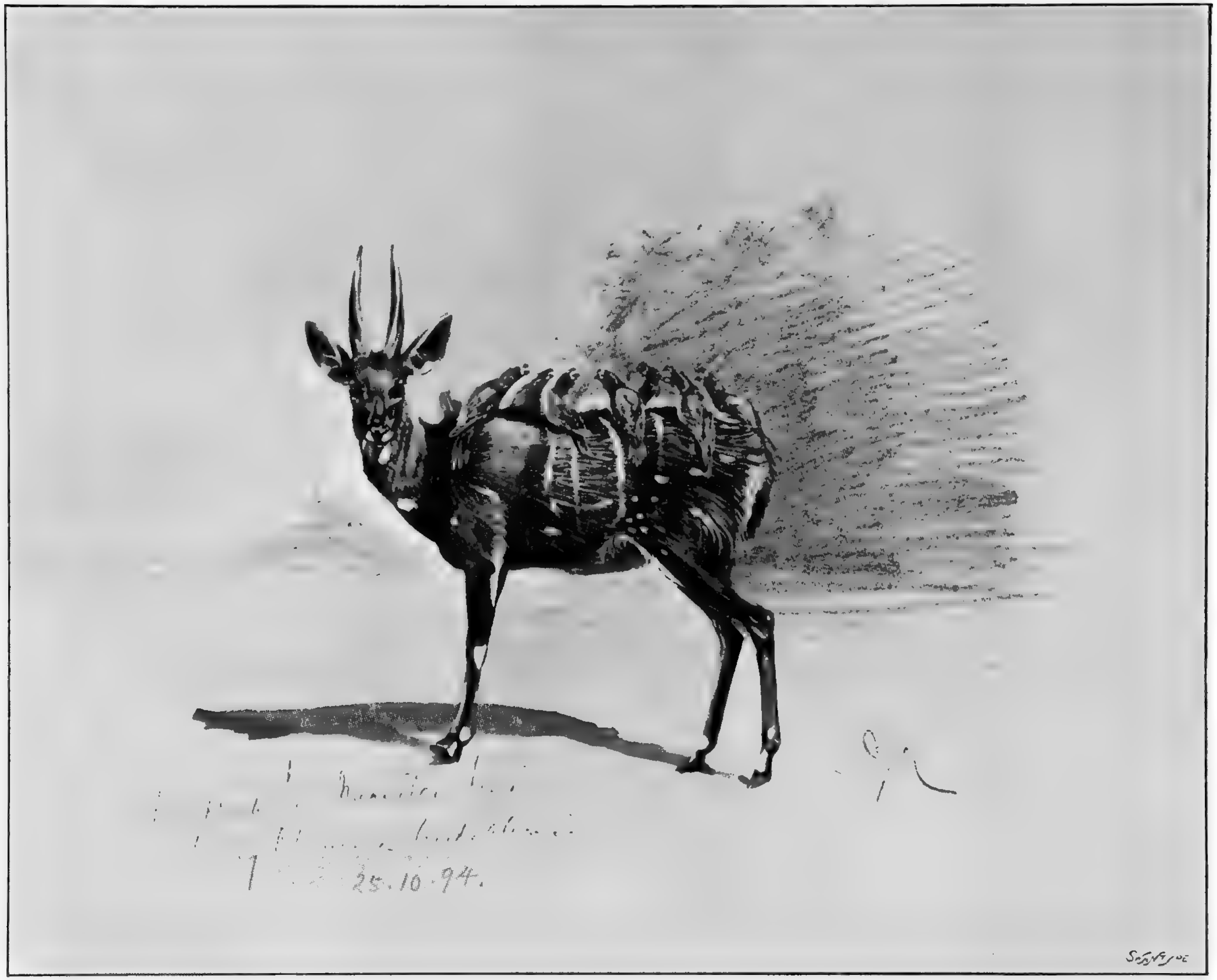
Little Cornellis still makes a point of paying me a visit at the mid-day outspan, generally bringing with him some dead creature, more or less decomposed, which he hugs affectionately under his arm; he is also generally accompanied by a nondescript terrier of questionable respectability. He is after that condensed milk of mine again, and works so hard for it by telling me long yarns of which I hardly understand a word, that I rarely refuse him his customary treat. The birds hanging on my waggon, for culinary or scientific purposes, are a never-ending source of delight to him, and it is not easy to keep them out of his reach when his heart is set on any addition to his imaginary span of oxen. As he has now a large biscuit-tin for a waggon, and tows it about with unholy shrieks, I am obliged in self-defence to give him something to play with; so I hand him over a khoorhan to represent an after-ox in his team, after which he sits quietly on his waggon, whip in hand, and, calling it "Englishman," proceeds to thrash it till there are no feathers left.

Prince has now learnt to bake fairly well, and uses ant-heaps as his ovens. I give a sketch of him employed in building one of these natural bakeries.

I gave Gentleman a pair of boots to-day, as he said his feet were so sore with sand-cracks he could not walk. His pride in his recent acquisition is most remarkable and interesting, and his elation is so great that, considering them too valuable to be placed on the portion of his body for which they were originally intended, he wears them in the curious manner shown in my sketch (see p. 71).

I now see that this was rather foolish on my part, for since my gift to Gentleman I notice that both Office and Pompoon are afflicted with a slight limp, which on the near approach of myself amounts to positive lameness. As, however, neither of them has yet made any complaint and we are not travelling through thorn bush, I shall wait a few days and see how symptoms develop.

It is quite true about there being a row in front. Magato has been bullying his next-door neighbours, who are said to be weak, inoffensive people, and the Dutch commandant of the district is going his rounds enrolling all the young Dutchmen he can collar to make up a force and put things right;



RHINOCEROS BIRDS ALARMED, AND CALLING ATTENTION TO THE OBJECT OF DANGER

The heads of the birds are held in the stiff and ungainly attitudes which I have represented.

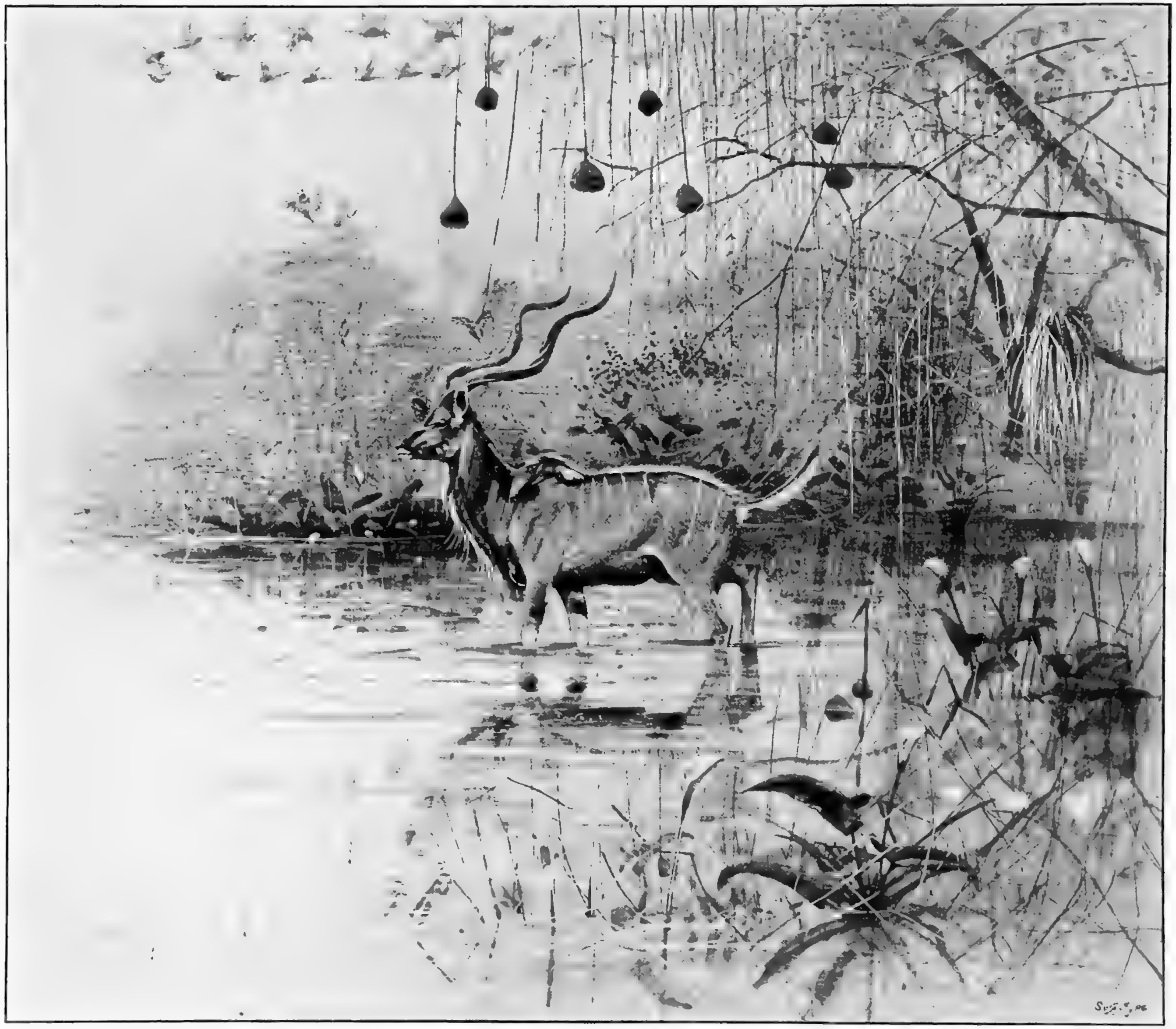
but the young men don't like this job, and are making themselves scarce in all directions. Hert and Tace are much afraid of being caught and taken off to fight, and can talk of nothing else. They are therefore doing all they can to make the old man leave me and go off to the Roi Rant. A great nuisance this, as, if he were to go, I should have some difficulty in picking up a decent hunter in Mashonaland who knows the ground; but, as it would not do to let them read my thoughts, I treat the matter of their going or staying as perfectly immaterial to me. And now I see I have a good friend in the old man, who will stick to me, let the boys say what they may.

21*st May.*—Yesterday I was delighted to hear some vaal khoorhans calling apparently close to the waggons in some long grass, and as we had had no meat of any sort for three days I was anxious to kill a brace. After carefully hunting all the ground with Pointer in the immediate vicinity of the calls, no fowl moved save an old white-necked crow, which rose out of the grass and sat on an ant-heap croaking away. Very surprising this, as I knew that Pointer, who was a good dog, could not have missed the birds had they been there. Hardly had I replaced my gun on the waggon when the "kirr-rack" of the male vaal khoorhan sounded loudly from the grass not 300 yards distant.

This time I waited for the head of the bird to appear above the grass, as I fancied I had marked the exact spot; but no such head betrayed itself. Still, feeling sure that the birds were there, I walked straight to the spot, when once more rose only the old white-necked crow. Amazed at my failure, and never dreaming that I could be deceived by a crow, I sat down on an ant-heap to reflect, and there I saw the old villain perched on the back of one of the oxen, and heard him squawk in exact imitation of the cry of the khoorhan. The white-necked crow is the "hoodie" of South Africa—a droll and cunning rascal who can readily be taught to acquire the notes of other birds; but in a wild state they seldom learn this trick. The way that old crow humbugged me to-day I shall not easily forget, though I must say I forgave him the trouble of my hunt when I listened to his peformance, so perfect was the imitation. The bird becomes more abundant as the traveller proceeds northward, as does also the little spur-winged plover commonly known throughout South Africa as the "kitwitjie." The latter are found in small parties in the immediate vicinity of water, the flocks varying in number from four to thirty. They are fond of resting on the well-worn and flat places forming outspanning spots. When in the air they are extremely noisy, and will fly round and chase each other for hours at a time, uttering the while their harsh notes. The chief enemy of these plover is the white-necked crow, and his appearance as he comes flying past one of their resting-places is always a signal for a combined attack on the part of the plovers, who certainly spare him not. During the nesting season the crows destroy large numbers of the eggs and young of the plover, who, being scattered in pairs at wide intervals, are hardly able to keep the marauder off. So Mr. Crow has pretty much his own way for these two months, and in return the plovers make his life a burden to him for the other ten. The mode of attack may be briefly described as follows. The whole party of plovers mount into the air till they are well above the object of attack, and there hang hovering, almost stationary, in the sky. Should the crow be flying along in their direction, they place themselves so as to intercept his flight. Then first one member drops like a hawk on his victim, striking the crow hard with his blunt spur, and even at times making the feathers fly. His example is quickly followed by another and another plover, so that no time is given the victim to dodge and evade his pursuers. It is most amusing to watch the efforts of the crow to evade his tormentors ; but unless he is very cunning and keeps outside the plovers' ground, he seldom escapes without some punishment. Some of the queer attitudes of the birds when thus engaged will be seen in my sketch.

The day following I killed nine khoorhans, which I believe to be of a new species. Whilst riding in front of the waggons, taking a parallel route to the road, I came across two bustards, both of which I killed, and shortly afterwards a party of five more, four of which I shot, the birds being extremely tame. These birds seem so different from the white-quilled black khoorhan, a very common species throughout South Africa, that I concluded at first they must be the black-bellied khoorhan, a rare species said only to be found on the high plateaux surrounding Salisbury in Mashonaland and the Mababe flats to the north of lake Ngami in the Kalahari. But those I shot this day and the following one in no way resembled that species. Except in general appearance they are much more closely allied to the white-quilled species.

I killed twelve of these bustards, one being a female with a young one just able to fly ; and both from the behaviour of the birds before I shot them and after I had preserved specimens I became convinced that they belong to a species not yet described. By a hard fate the whole collection of bustards

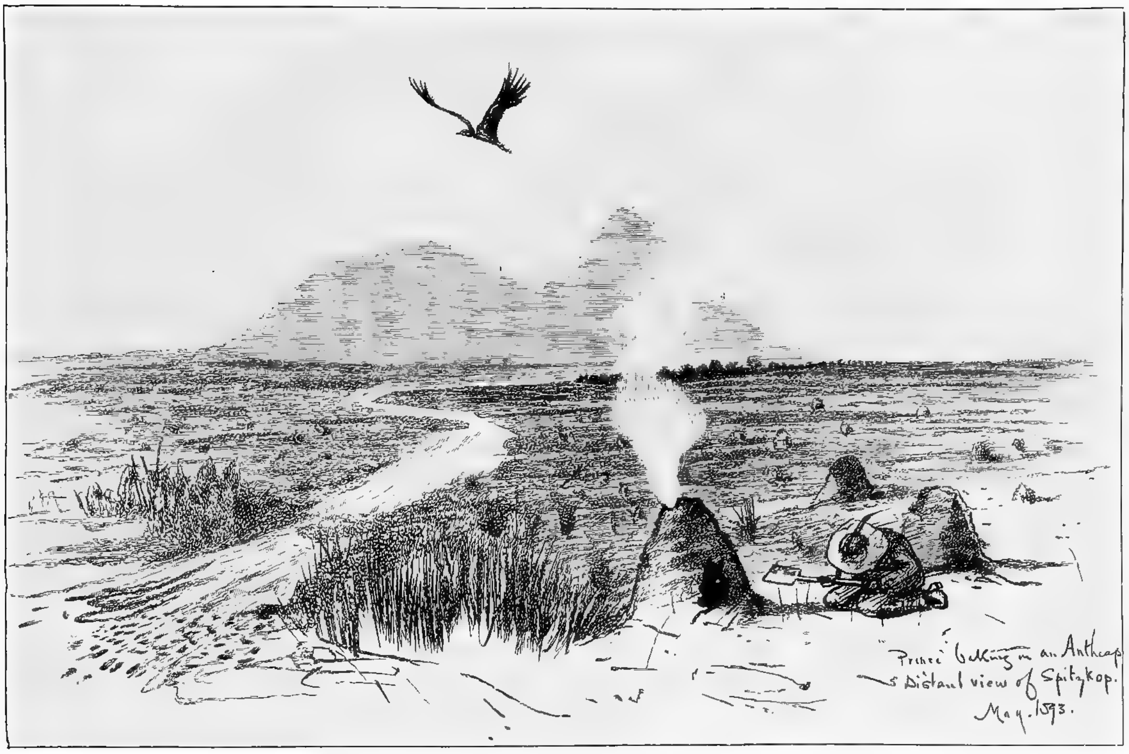


FINAL ALARM AND DEMONSTRATION OF A PARTY OF RHINOCEROS BIRDS BEFORE LEAVING AN ANIMAL

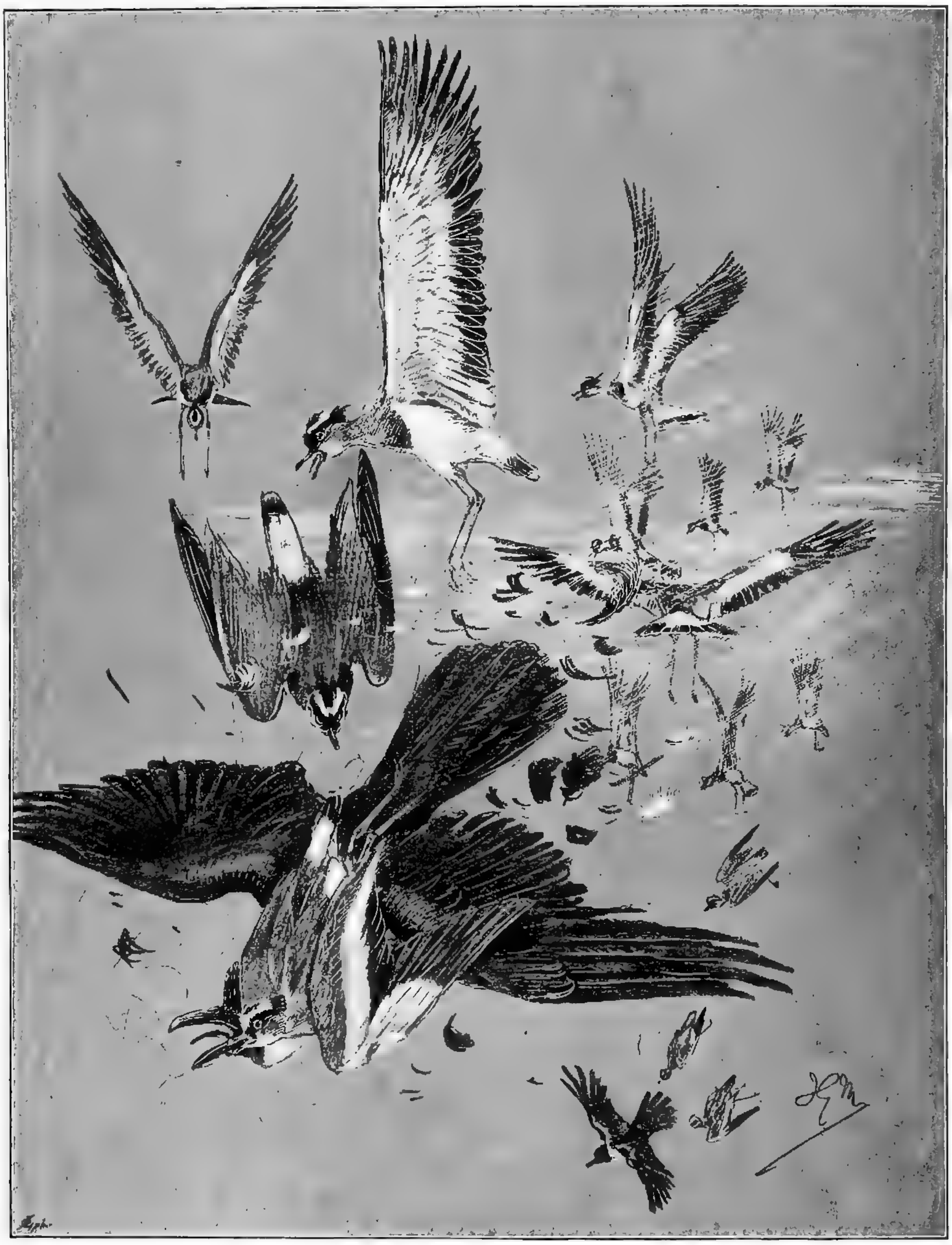
The small flock of birds are represented flying from the back of a koodoo bull and circling in the air above it.

and fracolins that I had been making for Mr. Ogilvie Grant of the British Museum were entirely destroyed by beetles, so the eight specimens which I had preserved were lost. However, on my return journey down country I managed to get one specimen, an old cock whose portrait I give here.

This bird I have shown to several of our leading ornithologists at home. Dr. Sharpe of the British Museum, our best living authority on South African birds, has been most kind in giving it his attention. He is of opinion that it is an immature *afroides*, and does not think it a new species; but I greatly doubt the correctness of this conclusion. The series of South African bustards at the Museum is extremely poor, and as this bird differs in many points from the common white-quilled black khoorhan, I shall continue to believe that it is a new form of bustard until some one brings home a complete series of the common bird showing the connecting links.


"Prince" baking in an Antheap
— & Distant view of Spitzkop.
May. 1893.

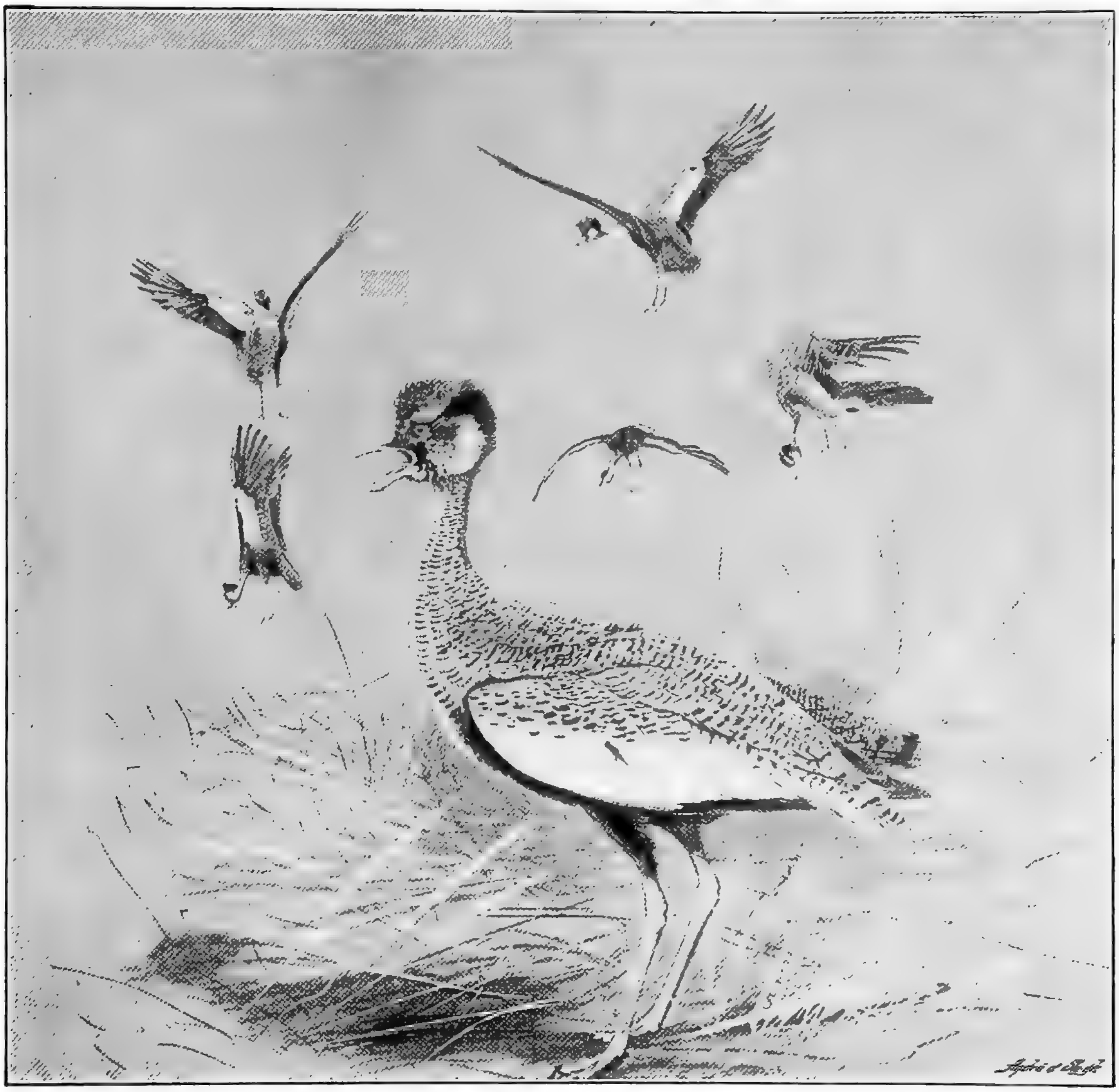
It may seem presumption on my part to dispute so eminent an authority as Dr. Sharpe, to whose kindness I am much indebted, but I consider he is as much handicapped as I am by lack of specimens for comparison. My hope is that some traveller or dweller in South Africa, who is something more than a pot-hunter, may, in the interest of science, send home to our Museum a series of the common white-quilled black khoorhan, showing the change of plumage at varying ages and seasons. Two points which struck me most forcibly in these bustards were the remarkable tameness and the extreme noisiness and strange attitudes they displayed.



KITWITJIES ATTACKING A WHITE-NECKED CROW

The plovers in the background are in their usual attitude of hovering in the air with their legs hanging downwards.

Towards the end of my trip, and afterwards in the Free State, I shot several of the two species *Otis afroides* and *Otis afer*, and many more came under my observation. Though demonstrative they are all very shy, keeping generally just out of shot. Now the bustards which I obtained north of Pietersberg were extremely tame, so much so that I think I could have bagged almost every bird I saw, whilst their antics in the air were quite amazing. I saw several of them turn complete back-somersaults amongst many other wonderful evolutions. As with loud screams they frequently

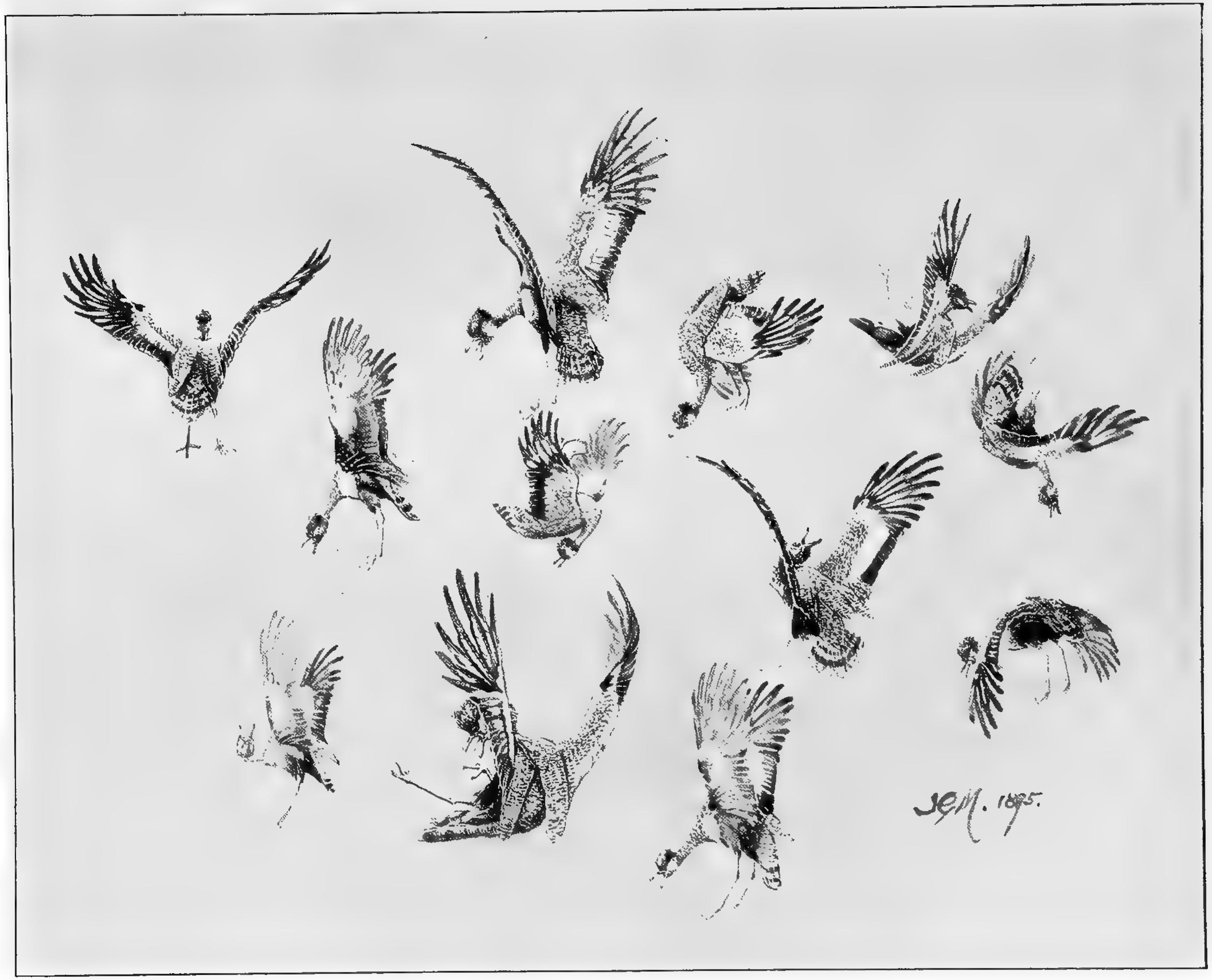


BUSTARD FROM PIETERSBERG FLATS

soared in the air, within thirty-five yards of me, I could observe their movements with perfect accuracy, so I could not possibly mistake what I saw. Others who may hereafter turn their attention to these clowns of the sky will, I am sure, endorse my remarks. I should not venture to make this statement if I had only seen one bird do this extraordinary feat; but I saw several (generally males) do so after being flushed, both during my two days amongst them on going up country and again on returning, and the performance struck me as being one of the most wonderful things in bird life I have ever seen. Some idea of the movements of this bustard may be gathered from my sketch.

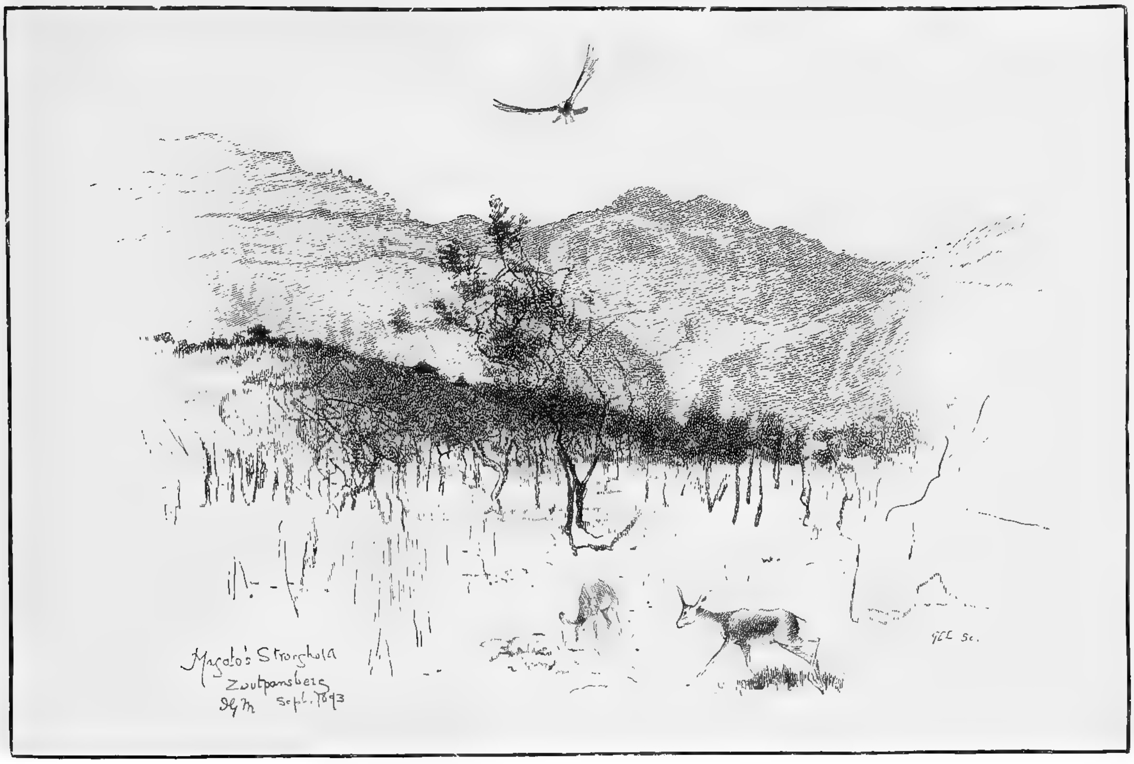
Another fact which strongly inclines me to believe this bird to be a new species is that the plumage of the male which I shot on my return journey six months later was identically the same as that of the bird which I killed when trekking up country. Now if the birds were, as Dr. Sharpe thinks, immatures of a known species, during a lapse of six months a very perceptible difference in the plumage would assuredly have taken place. In Messrs. Eglinton and Nichol's handbook there is recorded an instance of a bush khoorhan being shot when in the act of turning a back-somersault; but I am inclined to think that the bird may have been one of the species as to which Dr. Sharpe and I are at loggerheads. Though most of the South African birds are well known, so little attention seems to have been paid to their habits that there is still much to be learnt about the interesting little ways of even the commonest species.

23rd May, Tuesday.—On this great plateau stretching from Pietersberg to the last point of the Zoutpansberg there is very little game of any sort; after the first two days, when I found the bustards in question plentiful, I had hard work to keep the pot boiling in the way of fresh meat. Water was also scarce, brackish and undrinkable, save when made into tea or coffee; the grass too was almost entirely destroyed by the locusts, and the oxen had to be carefully handled, though we were racing our best to get on, as a string of waggons belonging to traders, hunters, etc., was close behind. The reports one hears on the road up to Mashonaland are both startling and wonderful—if true. But Dutchmen, I have long since learnt, are the most credulous people in the world. Every day either Teenie, Piet, Tace, or Hert came to me with some ghastly tale of what was going on up country. The game licence ranges from £10 to £200 a man, according to the lying capacity of my informant; fever never was so bad, and every one at the drift has turned



EXTRAORDINARY ATTITUDES OF A BUSTARD FROM PIETERSBERG HIGH VELDT

a fish-belly white; the Matabele are as usual on the war-path; Magato is going to bag every waggon on the road; the Limpopo is still impassable, and (of all the yarns most lovely) the B. S. A. Police have orders to catch all Dutchmen going into Mashonaland to shoot big game, and put them in a large *tronk* (prison) specially constructed at the Middle Drift for their reception. When I found they really believed this, I must say I roared with laughter; for a Dutchman, though anxious to convey the idea that he is supremely smart, is in reality the most gullible creature under the sun.



I will not bore my readers with all the worries I had to put up with from this date until I had reached the Limpopo; suffice it to say that as we proceeded northward it was only by arguments again and again repeated that I could keep them going at all. I must confess I got very sick of their eternal whines and fears, for all seemed resolutely set against my plans, except the old man, who I knew could with difficulty maintain his authority in his own waggons.

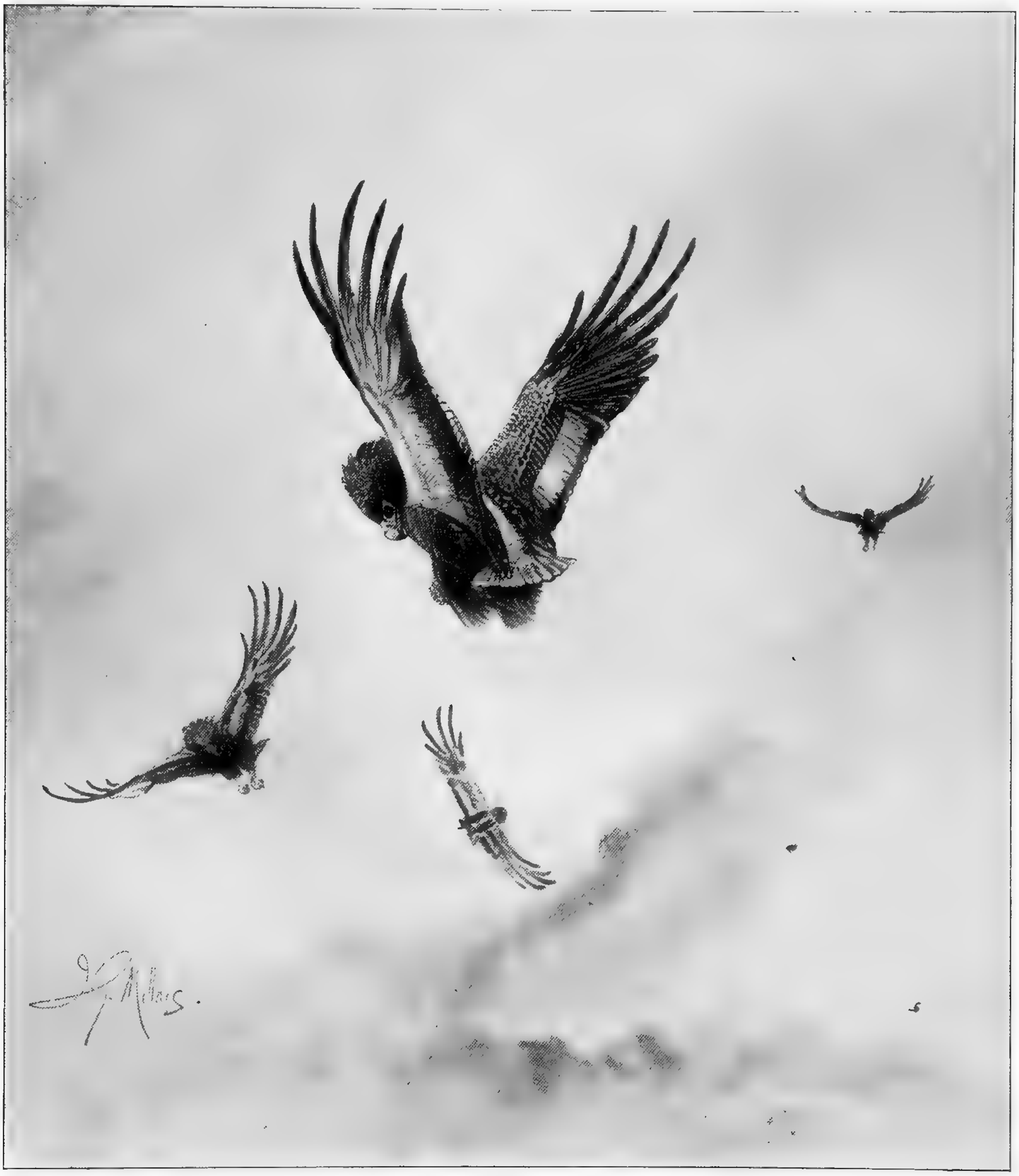
We have now got fairly away from civilisation, and hear the native drums going all night. To-day we pass near Magato's stronghold, which is situated about four miles off the track, on the highest point of the Zoutpansberg.

Here the gentleman in question is said to be encamped with about 2000 of his warriors, in open defiance of the Dutch Government. For the last ten years that august body have been in a chronic condition of "taking steps" against this black rascal, but actually doing nothing. He is in too strong a position to make war on without great expense, and the Z.A.R. don't like putting their hands in their pockets. Oom Paul's mode of government is entirely unpopular amongst the more sensible-minded Dutch, and from the many conversations I listened to round camp fires I gathered that the people would heartily welcome an English administration of their affairs in exchange for the feeble and narrow-minded rule of their present Volksraad, whose ideas on politics are based on the Old Testament and whose financial methods are much on a par with those of Mr. Jabez Balfour. Though more or less opposed to the English as fellow-countrymen, nearly all Dutchmen acknowledge that our rule is far more honest and beneficial than that of their own countrymen, and that in the Transvaal a renewal of the British Protectorate would be hailed with joy by the majority of the nation. At present the poor have a bad time of it, for they are heavily taxed, and absolutely nothing is done in return for them to better either their own position or that of their country.

The mountain scenery in this part of the Zoutpansberg is certainly very fine, particularly the "poort" leading up to Magato's stronghold. Fine woods grow right up to the summit of the mountains. Here raptorial birds are numerous, and even the duikers and steinbucks begin to show up more frequently. We have also seen to-day tracks of pallah and koodoo, and Magato is said to preserve a herd of buffalo on the other side of the mountain, which he keeps for the sport of any white guests whom he chooses to favour.

The bateleur eagle is now exceedingly common, and may be seen at all hours wheeling in short circles over the bush-covered plain. It is not a shy bird for an eagle; while hunting for its prey, it will frequently pass close over the head of any one riding; one can therefore see quite clearly the peculiar manner in which it holds its head whilst searching for khoorhans, partridges, hares, and small mammals. As it sails along, quickly wheeling to right and left over likely spots, the bill is compressed into the crop, and the head held in such a manner as to convince me that the bird only searches the ground over which it has already passed. While flying close over you, you will see the black crown of its head, so presented as to give the bird the appearance of spying between his own feet that are closely drawn up.

It is the natural instinct of all birds and small animals that form the prey of the Raptores to squat closely to the ground on discovering the approach of the enemy, and to take advantage of whatever stones and herbage the surroundings



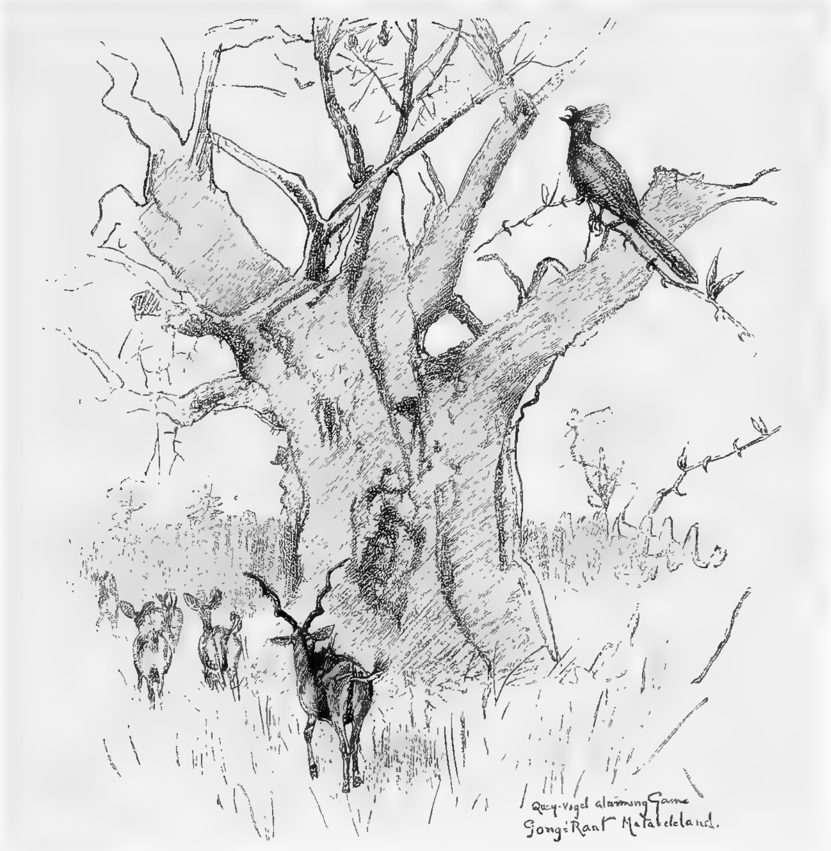
THE CURIOUS WAY IN WHICH THE BATELEUR EAGLE CARRIES ITS HEAD WHILST HUNTING
This little eagle, instead of watching for prey in front or immediately below, appears to search for objects on the ground over which it has already passed.

may offer; and much more frequently than is commonly supposed their tactics are successful, for both birds and animals that are frequently persecuted habitually fight shy of spots where natural cover is unattainable. Now it generally happens that after the object of danger has passed both birds and animals quickly get over their sense of fear and raise themselves from the ground to their ordinary attitudes, even though the enemy may have only just sailed past. I have myself seen blue hares, in Scotland, rise and bolt along a hill-side over which a golden eagle had just passed, and on another occasion a covey of ptarmigan fly up and break away close behind an eagle who had failed to notice them. As if aware of this propensity the bateleur, who is a splendid hand at turning quickly, hovers around watching for his prey to betray itself, when he instantly makes his pounce.

24th May.—Made big treks last night and this morning, and reached Braek River at twelve to-day. Birds are now really numerous—pileated francolins and brown red-necked francolins—whilst the number of yellow-throated sand grouse that come to drink here is extraordinary. I killed five brace in a very short time, but did not like to use any more of my cartridges on such small fowl. During the day Oom Roelef and I took our rifles and cut across country to this outspan, in the hope of finding koodoo, whose spoor is now frequent. Hert found a troop at the end of the Zoutpansberg foot-hills; but his horse, a young and only half-broken animal, became excited when he got off to shoot, and he lost his chance. The bush being very thick, there is but a poor chance of riding into these animals here. There are two lions knocking about, and have been well known for the past five years; no one seems able to kill them, and they subsist mostly on the deserted lung-sick oxen of passing waggoners, and what they can levy from the native goat kraals. To-day we distinctly saw the spoor of one of these beasts; though not too fresh, there was no doubt about it. It is something to see the spoor of a wild lion for the first time, for it lets you know you are fairly on the way to the happy hunting-grounds, and that is indeed a long and weary journey nowadays.

There is also a giraffe known to frequent this bush, and as he drinks regularly at the "Blauw Ghat," a pool some fourteen miles north of this, it is marvellous to think how he can have escaped destruction at the hands of passing trekkers. Naughty, sarcastic Englishmen on the road say that it is this one poor relic of a vanished race which caused the Volksraad to pass a law forbidding the slaughter of these animals in the Transvaal.

The character of the country alters gradually as the traveller proceeds northward from the Zoutpansberg over the desolate and waterless thorn forest that lies between these fine mountains and the Limpopo. The climate is said to be extremely unhealthy, and no one dares to live there, though at Braek River hard by there is a miserable sort of store where a poor fever-stricken wretch of a German ekes out a miserable existence. When I saw him, he was dead white, and looked (as they say in Scotland) as if he were "dying on his feet." He had already lost his wife and three children, and was annually a victim to severe attacks of fever, but nothing would induce him to leave. He should stick there, he said, until his time came. One can hardly understand how any human being could endure such an existence, hardly a soul to speak to for five months in the year; yet he will, no doubt, linger on there in solitary wretchedness till the Master calls him away.



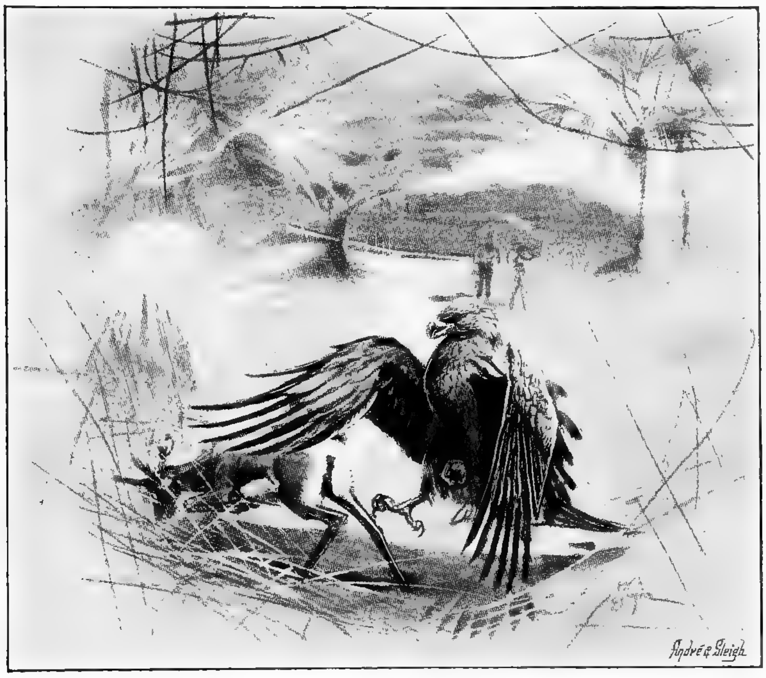
The "Quay" bird, or Quay vogel of the Dutch, becomes very abundant from Braek River northwards. It has a cockatoo-like appearance and a monotonous cry. In the early mornings these birds come in large numbers to the pools to drink in company with mouse birds, bush doves, francolins, and glossy starlings, and at that time the watering-places often present a very gay and pretty sight.

The Dutch hunters declare that the quay vogel is a most inveterate disturber of game, and that these birds give wild animals due warning of the approach of the hunter; and there is every reason to believe that this is true. It is habitually silent during the warmer hours of the day, but never fails to utter its tiresome call when it detects the presence of man. Van Staden tells me he has frequently lost chances of sport owing to the attentions of these objectionable fowls.

28th May, Saturday.—At last a little game has fallen to my lot—not much to boast of, but encouraging as a start, after hunting hard but unsuccessfully since leaving Marah in the Zoutpansberg, on the chance of picking up pallah, koodoo or wart-hog, all of which now occur in sparing numbers.

In the morning one of the De Mervelles killed a koodoo cow and lost a bull, whilst Tace killed an old wart-hog boar. I spent the hottest part of the day in making sketches of the former, and in the evening went out with Van Staden to see if we could drop across anything. In passing through some open bush a steinbuck ram gave me an easy chance at about forty yards, and I succeeded in striking him through the ribs rather far back. He managed, however, to go a short distance, and whilst doing so a large eagle—I fancy the tawny eagle, which is here common—made a beautiful stoop at him, which caused the buck to squat at once, and happily prevented his disappearance down an aard vark burrow on the edge of which he was lying when we got up. Shortly after this we found two steinbuck ewes also, one of which Van Staden killed by a very pretty shot.

The following day I went with Tace to help him to cut up his boar, and to see, if possible, the manner in which the vultures deal with a carcase as soon as it is exposed. A long ride through thick bush brought us to the dead beast, and having removed the branches under which it was hidden, we commenced our gruesome task, the completion of which was hailed with satisfaction by a host of vultures, who, after sailing around us for some time in majestic circles, quietly proceeded to dinner. It was a splendid old boar with fine tusks, though the points were somewhat worn with old age. "All things are beautiful in nature save when the vileness of man converts them otherwise;"—so singeth the poet Whittier; but I don't think Mr. Whittier ever saw an old wart-hog lying dead, or he might have seen cause to make an exception to his otherwise truthful remark. For sheer hideousness the old boar of this species easily carries off the palm, and the nightmarish repulsion of his wicked little eyes so intensifies his ugliness as to make him about as loathsome a specimen of animal life as can anywhere be seen.[1] But, despite his appearance, there is a force of character and a dogged determination about him that one cannot but admire. Those splendidly white, gleaming tusks too, curled up so gracefully at the points, remind one strongly of some grizzled old warrior with his white moustache carefully trained to represent the fierceness of his profession. As to his disposition, like that of the white-tailed gnu, accounts differ widely. From sportsmen of excitable nature one hears stories of such astounding bravery and ferocity that a man who is going to tackle the animal for the first time may well expect to find in him as formidable an enemy as a lion or a buffalo. I cannot believe, however, that the wart-hog is the dangerous beast he is made out to be. Most of the larger African animals—even antelopes—when wounded, will charge if the hunter incautiously approaches them too closely while they are still able to use their legs ; and this is probably all that can be said of the wart-hog. Nearly all the accidents that arise in this way



TAWNY EAGLE STOOPING AT WOUNDED STEINBUCK are due either to the carelessness of old hunters whose familiarity with danger has bred contempt, or to the rashness of young fellows who know nothing of the habits of animals, and being tiros in the art of shooting, cannot tell how an animal has been struck or the effect of a bullet in different parts of the body. Only a sportsman of experience and gifted with quick observation can tell how an animal has been hit, and the consequent degree of danger in approaching it for the final *coup de grace*.

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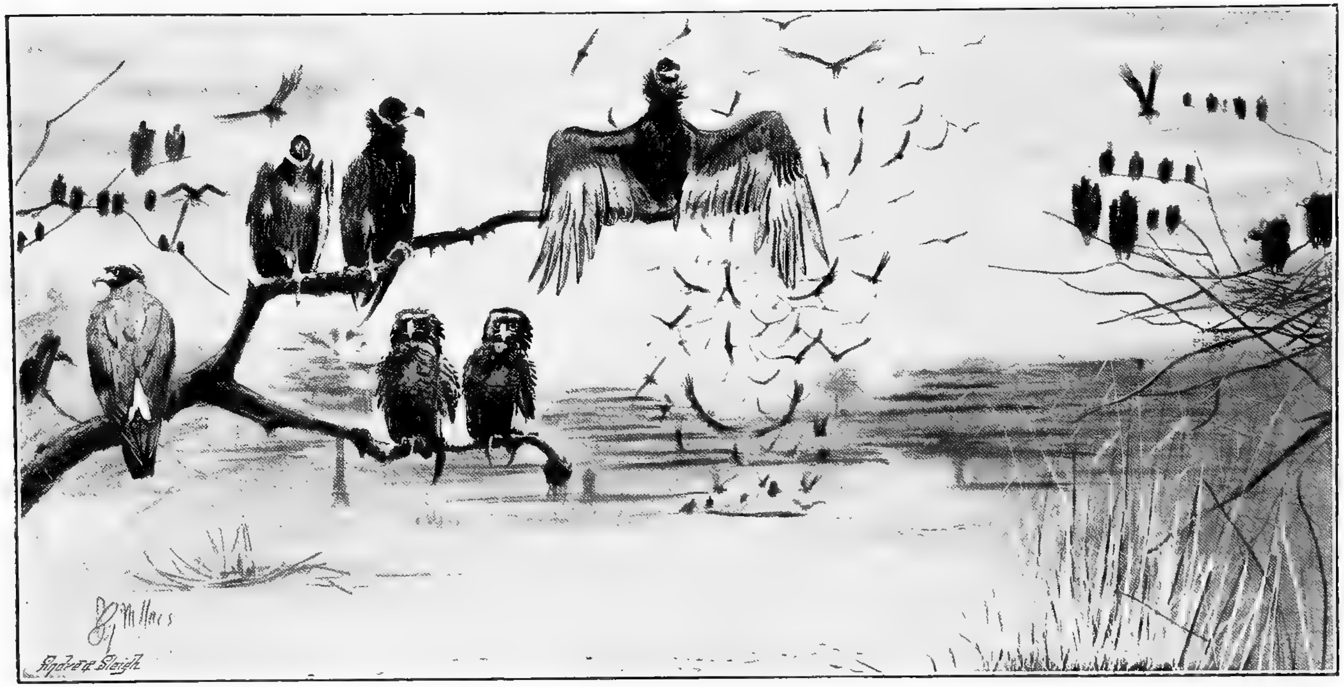
[1] The wart-hog cannot be said to be the wild boar of South Africa only, for he ranges over nearly the whole of the great continent, with the exception of the west and extreme north.

The habits of the wart-hog are much like those of all the other wild pigs ; so little need be said of them. Though no African writer of experience seems to have mentioned the fact, I am inclined to believe that in the hot summer months these pigs are to be found in the vicinity of big rivers in much larger numbers than is generally supposed, forming at such times large wallowing parties in some selected spot. By the Nuanetsi I noticed strong evidence of very large numbers of them having worked along the banks and made extensive mud wallows. According to the illustrations and statements in various books, the animal, when extremely alarmed, carries his tail absolutely erect ; but this, I think, is a mistake, the wisp of hair at the end of the tail falling forward as shown in my sketch on page 131. I noticed this first in a young sow on which we came suddenly one day. We were within twenty yards of her, and I could see quite plainly how she erected and held her tail as she galloped away at full speed. On another occasion, when Hert and I were hunting together, we got within a few yards of a whole family party, and were much amused to see them all going through the same performance.

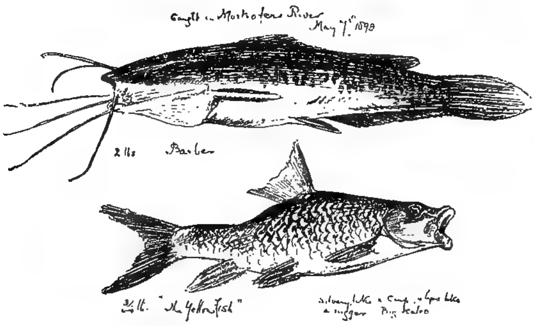
Nearly every one has his own theory as to the way in which vultures collect and descend on a carcase, and my own observation certainly tends to support that of Mr. Rider Haggard, whose fascinating works on Africa betray at every turn the observations of a man who is both a good sportsman and a naturalist. From *Allan Quatermain* I subtract the following :—" Often have I watched these great and repulsive birds, and marvelled at the extraordinary speed with which they arrive on a scene of slaughter. A buck falls to your rifle, and within a minute, high in the blue ether, appears a speck that gradually grows into a vulture, then another, and another. I have heard many theories advanced to account for the wonderful power of perception nature has given these birds. My own, founded on a good deal of observation, is that the vultures, gifted as they are with powers of sight greater than those given by the most powerful glass, quarter out the heavens among themselves, and


J G Millais
André & Sleigh

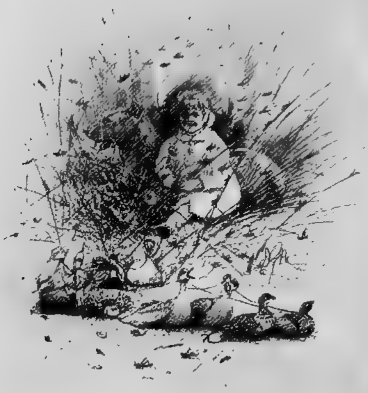
SOME SOUTH AFRICAN BIRDS OF PREY

hanging in mid-air at a vast height—probably from two to three miles above the earth—keep watch, each of them, over an enormous stretch of country. Presently one of them spies food, and instantly begins to sink towards it. Thereupon his next neighbour in the airy heights, sailing leisurely through the blue gulf, at a distance perhaps of some miles, follows his example, knowing that food has been sighted. Down he goes, and all the vultures within sight of him follow after, and so do all those in sight of them. In this way the vultures for twenty miles round can be summoned to the feast in a few minutes."

At Toca Spring, where the water is salt, we encountered some black hunters who had just come out of the Mashona country. They had been hunting for a month, and had killed nine koodoos and six sable antelopes, etc., and told us that we should find sable plentiful—the animal I most desired to shoot. At the Drift they had paid one sable skin by way of licence—rather a come-down after the £200 licence talk that I have heard for some time past.


Caught in Moshofens River
May 7th 1893
2 lbs Barber
¾ lb. "The Yellowfish"
silvery like a Carp, in shape like a bigger Big scales

As there were several kopjies (hills) about, I thought I should not lose myself, so went for a long round on Jimmy by myself. Just as I was turning to make for camp again I came across a great deal of fresh koodoo spoor, and shortly afterwards started a troop of six cows, one of whom I fired at as she crossed in front of me about sixty yards. She fell at once to the shot, but got up and went off slowly after the troop just as Jimmy took it into his head to make for camp on his own account. It was a sweltering hot day, and I used every conceivable dodge to circumvent and catch him, only to discover after half an hour's running about, and considerable loss of temper, the futility of chasing a horse that has once got loose. At last I managed to get in front of the runaway and waited till he started feeding, when I quietly crept up and secured him. By this time I was more than a mile from the spot where I fired at the koodoo, and after a vain search to find his spoor, was obliged to give it up and return to camp, tired and considerably out of sorts; much disappointed too at the loss of the koodoo.



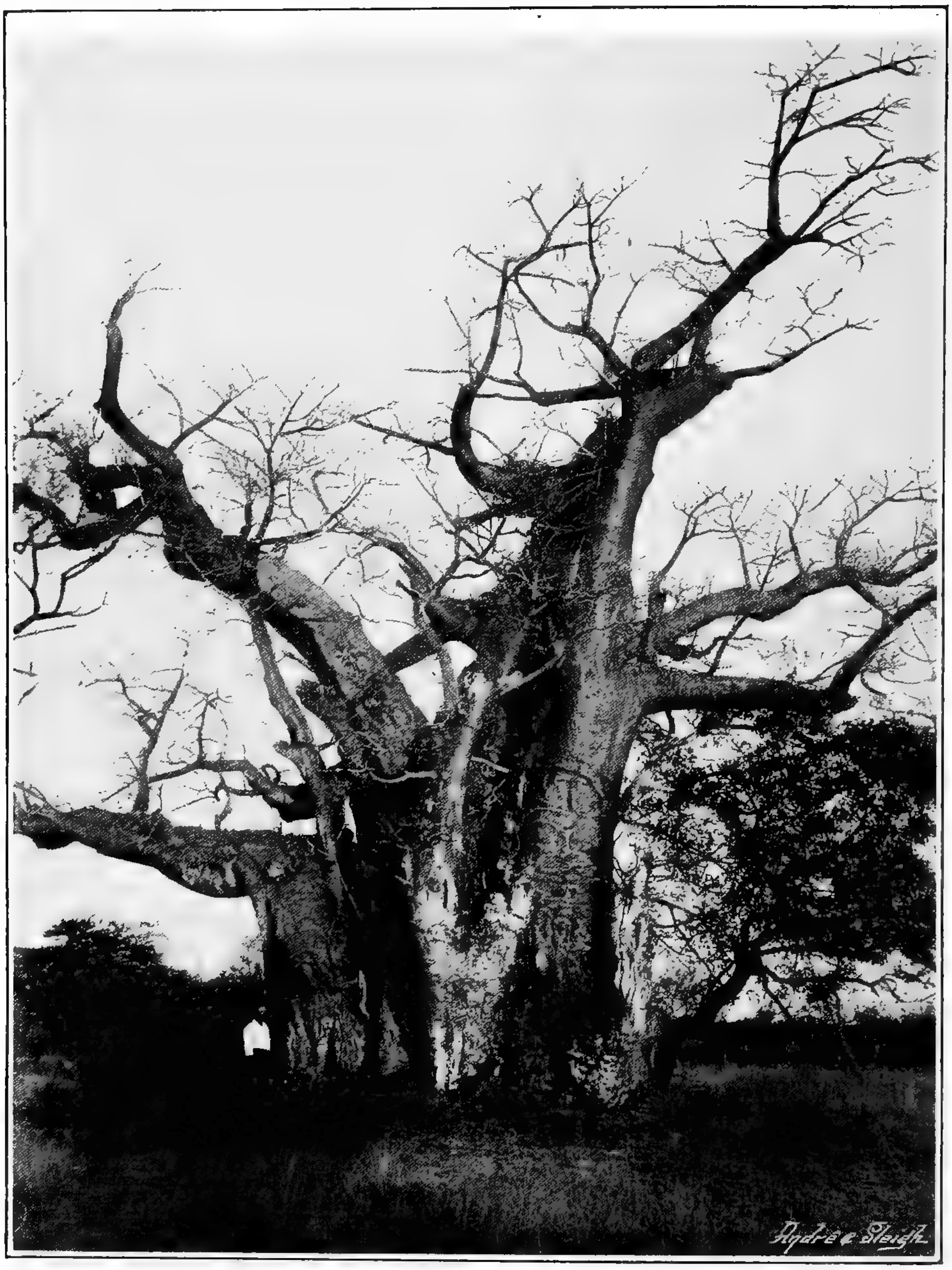
CORNELLIS AND HIS FOREST DOLLS

CHAPTER V

After leaving Toca Spring we journeyed on to a very pretty spot called Moifontein (nice fountain, or pleasant waters), which fully came up to its name, for the water was both good and sweet, such as we had not tasted since leaving Pietersberg. Here, too, the forest became far finer. Big trees of various kinds raised themselves everywhere in contrast with the monotonous mimosa forests; and the graceful melala palms were to be seen in picturesque groups denoting the presence of water. Here, too, the great cream-of-tartar or baobab trees abound, forming in fact the chief feature of the landscape.

The huge trunks of these remarkable trees, some of them measuring twenty-five yards in circumference, seem to be out of all proportion to the branches, the latter being singularly poor and scraggy in the matter of wood, whilst the stems have the appearance of being afflicted with a sort of arboreal dropsy. Nearly all the trees are heavy with a nut-like fruit of which the Dutch are extremely fond. Boring a hole in one side of the shell, they put water in to form a compound liquid with the acid coatings of the interior, and the result is a palatable and cooling drink, such as not even Sir Wilfred Lawson could object to. These cream-of-tartar trees are numerous all the way along the road to Mashonaland, and there is a certain silent grandeur about them, which is all the more noticeable as there are so few big trees to break the monotony of most of the African landscapes. Many birds make their nests in the branches, and among the more lofty and isolated trees many are found with long notches in their trunks, cut by the natives for the purpose of using them as watch-towers, a fine view being generally obtainable from the summit.

On the road to Moifontein, Oom Roelef and I were hunting, as usual, ahead of the waggons. Passing along the base of some small kopjies we came across a fine old wart-hog boar and his wife, who had evidently some knowledge of mankind and did not at all wish to increase it, for the moment they caught sight of us, up went their tails and away they fled in a panic, without offering any chance of a shot.



A BAOBAB TREE

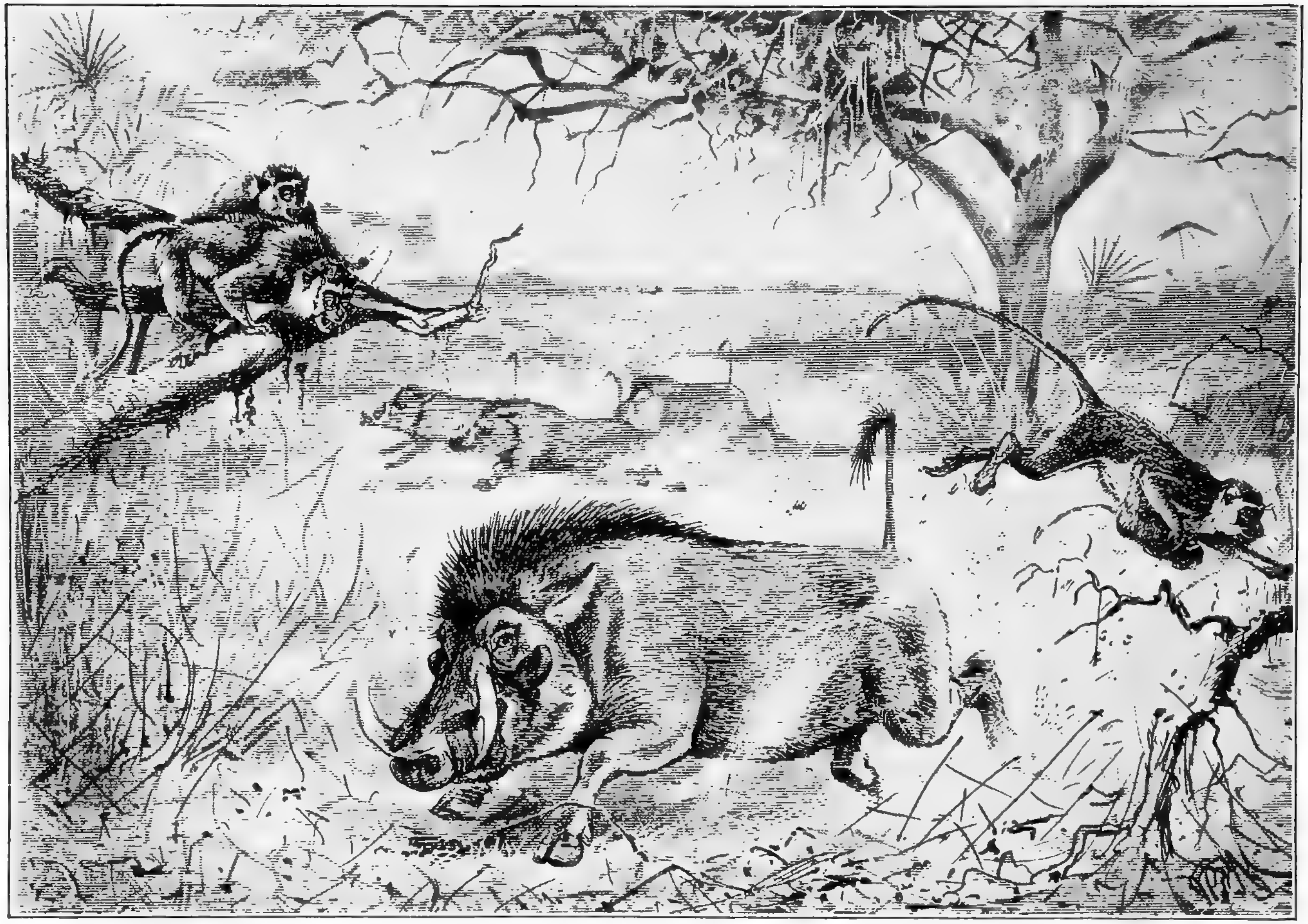
Shortly after this we climbed a high tree on the summit of one of the kopjies, in the hope of seeing koodoo, of which there was much spoor here; but though we had a magnificent view of the country, even to the line of trees extending to the great Limpopo itself, three days northward, we saw nothing in the shape of animal life, and soon came down again to resume our journey in the direction of Moifontein. There seemed to have been many wart-hogs here, some particular root attracting them to this spot, for the ground was torn up all round the base of these kopjies, showing where they had been moving about in big parties since the last rains. About ten minutes after leaving the hills we encountered another old boar, with his wife and family, standing gazing at us in an open glade, and I ought certainly to have killed him. On my firing he gave a loud squeal of pain and dashed off with the rest ; so both Oom and I thought he was ours. After a bit Oom found some blood, and then a little more ; but it shortly ceased altogether, and as the animal was evidently still galloping we gave up the chase, as he was undoubtedly only slightly wounded and there was little chance of our overtaking him. I felt a bit low after this, fearing I might not get another chance at such a fine old tusker as this.

On arriving at Moifontein we were pleased to find that no one had outspanned there for many months, and consequently a good deal of game was in the habit of drinking at the pools nightly ; so our hopes rose high at the thought of falling in with koodoo or possibly some sable antelope, a troop of which had been till recently accustomed to drink there. Oom and I therefore, after a hasty meal and changing our horses, started and worked westward for the rest of the day, but without seeing anything. Piet Landsberg, however, fell in with a troop of koodoo in which were two fine old bulls, and had, he said, two good chances at them but failed to score. This is an extraordinary admission for a Dutchman, all of whose bullets are in the habit of striking ; but Piet was not one of that sort ; he had less bombast about him than any Dutchman I afterwards became acquainted with, except of course Van Staden, who was much too good a man to talk rubbish of that sort. Piet afterwards proved the best shot of all of us, though he was much handicapped by losing his horse and having to hunt on foot. Never having had any big game shooting before, when he came home after a bad miss he would sit down by the fire and, sinking into the depths of woe, from which no supper could tempt him, he would bemoan his bad luck, declaring he would never again get a chance at such a beast as that which he had just lost. I wonder who amongst us that has enjoyed the glorious chase of the great creatures of the earth has not experienced poor Piet's sensations, and felt in the depth of his sorrow the degradation he has brought upon himself by that awful and inexcusable miss ! Fortunately the switchback of human sensations brings us back again and again to the pinnacle of hope.

After a good night's sleep, the hunter arises fresh and happy, resolved to go out and find that same beast again, or perhaps another better.

Shortly after our return to camp in the evening the De Mervelles, Basadanotes, and Erasmus arrived and outspanned beside us, and from some remarks of theirs, a few of which I now began to understand, I saw pretty well how the wind lay, and that the sooner Oom and I got away and kept clear of such a large party the better it would be for our success. The difficulty was this: the De Mervelles, who, as I afterwards found, were very good fellows, had persuaded Tace, Hert, and Piet to stop where they were and hunt with them, the real reason being that they were themselves afraid of being made to pay the hunting licence at the Middle Drift, or that even greater troubles would overtake them. In addition to this, Jan Van de Mervelle was Hertina's sweetheart, and consequently the female vote (a very strong one in Dutch households) was given against me. Now, that the reader may properly understand the intricacies of the Dutch law of possession amongst the Boers who still lead the wild life, he must be introduced for a moment to some of the curious manners and customs of these good people. When a child is born it is generally presented with a cow; the cow will in course of time have a calf or calves, and they in turn further progeny whilst the child owner is growing. The consequence is that by the time the girl or boy (as the case may be) has arrived at maturity his or her worldly possessions commonly include eight or ten beasts, five of which may be amongst the span of oxen used for trekking when the family are moving from one country to another, for either agricultural or hunting purposes. This member of the family, therefore, being in part owner of the team, has a voice in the matter of all plans connected with such movements, and may refuse to allow his or her oxen to trek, owing to sickness, lameness, or other causes; and if the objections are not promptly overruled there may be considerable delay. Here then poor old Oom Roelef, the head of the family, was fairly boycotted by his own people, and I myself put in a considerable fix, as by this time I should have greatly regretted to part with my friend. He and Teenie were the only ones on my side, and desirous of going on; and though I knew it would be a tough job to get Teenie to move at all, as he was a man easily swayed by others, I had fortunately his contract in black and white, and knew he was afraid of losing his bargain, which was a good one.

Things having reached a climax, the old man came over to my waggon and disclosed the whole state of affairs in a voice of mingled anger and sorrow.



PRESSING BUSINESS ELSEWHERE

The tail of the wart-hog as carried when the animal is frightened. The upper portion drops forward like an ear of barley.

His wife hated Mashonaland ; she had been ill there one year, and half dead with bad food and water another, and was now stumping up and down discharging her pent-up feelings in the choicest Dutch Billingsgate. Hertina of course did not wish to leave her beloved Jan, and the other girls would not allow their oxen to budge, for their sister said it was a wicked country for fever where we were going, and even if they did not die there, all the oxen would. Tace and Hert were so lazy they did not wish to move another yard ; they liked, too, the pleasant company of the Basadanotes and De Mervelles. Piet was more or less neutral ; his inclination being to go on with us, though he did not much care what happened so long as he got some shooting. The "little rift within the lute" had been widening ever since we met the other hunters, and now I saw that there was nothing for it but to hold a regular palaver, which is always done when any subject of importance is to be discussed in Dutch circles. I accordingly adjourned to their big fireplace, where Tante served us all with her excellent coffee to put us in a good humour, and we settled down to seriously discuss the situation. Immediately I had taken my place I saw by the insolent manner of Tace and Hert that they fancied I was in their power and could not proceed further, or in fact do anything without Oom Roelef, whom they considered they had checkmated ; and once a Dutchman of the downright boorish class fancies he has got the better of you, there is no end to his arrogance and overbearing swagger. This naturally got my back up, and I resolved to move on the next day without any of them, rather than give in to such poor-spirited men. Oom Roelef was remarkably quiet, but rolled his great eyes about in a way which suggested that some one was going to catch it pretty considerably by and by. After we had listened to the protestations of the family, to promiscuous remarks of the other hunters, and lastly, to Miss Boree's (aged twelve) reasons for the inability of her oxen to trek, I got up and went away to my own waggon, telling Teenie to say to Oom Roelef that under any circumstances I should move on towards the river at sunrise the next day, and that as he had promised to come with me to Mashonaland and show me the game, I trusted he would keep his word. This had the desired effect. I knew that Oom had only to assert himself properly, as he could do upon occasion, and things would go all right. As his wife once said to me : "My man is too good-natured, and people humbug him ; but once he is roused he is the devil." Whether he played the devil or not that night at Moifontein I do not know, but about 10 P.M. I heard angry voices and sounds of heavy blows, followed by weeping and wailing, from which I supposed that the old man was working gradually through his family with his *sjambok*—a conclusion I afterwards found to be fairly correct. The family, however, were always remarkably reticent on this point, so I never heard the entire story. At any rate no cloud appeared next morning to mar the pleasant associations of myself with his domestic circle, and when I ordered Teenie to get my oxen, and inspan, expecting a disturbance of some sort in the waggons opposite me, nothing of the sort occurred ; and I presently saw Clinboy (Van Staden's Zulu boy) engaged in collecting his master's beasts, which were presently inspanned and started in the wake of my waggon along the northward road.

This, I am thankful to say, was the last and only trouble I had with my associates, whose spirits and friendliness towards myself increased greatly when we entered Mashonaland and eventually got to the game ; and by the end of our journey I am sure no happier party could have been found anywhere, in spite of our little disagreements at starting. These little unpleasantnesses may and do occur to all travellers and hunters when working with people of other nations ; the man who has made several expeditions in foreign lands without any such experience is indeed fortunate. As the home character of the Boer is not as yet very widely known in England, I may perhaps be excused a few remarks on him before finally leaving the subject.

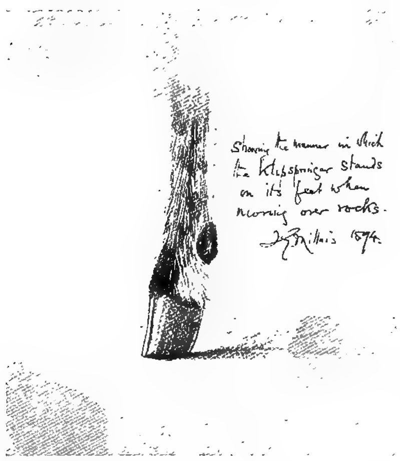
With few exceptions Dutchmen are what we English would call "impossible" people to get along with. Though possessing many good qualities, they are lacking not only in humour but in that ready grasp of things in general that we are accustomed to look upon as amongst the essentials of an agreeable companion. An Englishman has hardly anything in common with them. Their fun is either forced, in the hope of showing themselves smarter than they really are, or is only such as may be found in mere coarseness and obscenity. The associations, too, which any travelling Englishman has with moving Dutchmen are necessarily of short duration, and he has little or no opportunity for dispelling those mists of suspicion and dislike with which every Dutchman is brought up to regard the Britisher. Conversation of a superficial character and ordinary civilities are exchanged ; but with all this the Dutchman keeps his shield arm up, and it is only after months of close association with him, when he has learnt to feel himself at home with you, that you can see his character in its true light. The younger he is, the more insulting and objectionable is his attitude towards foreigners, but as he grows older he becomes far less aggressively anti-English in action, if not in ideas. At twenty every young Dutchman wants to have another Boer war, and talks bombastically of how half a dozen Boers could sweep an English regiment of "roibatjes" off the face of the earth in half an hour, and constantly refers in grandiose terms to Majuba. His boast is that if the English continue to encroach upon his territories as they have lately been doing, he will have to start and shoot a few thousands down as bucks. But age brings with it reasoning power and a wider range of thought, and as he gets older the Boer, though liking the Englishman none the better, sees that it is to his advantage to keep on good terms with him, and that a second war might not end in precisely the same way as the first.

Those who have read Mr. Rider Haggard's masterpiece *Jess* will have gained a far better idea of the virulent anti-English Boer than any I can convey. He has painted to perfection the young ignorant Dutchman, the swaggering insolent cubs who love to talk of the cheerful days of Majuba Hill, when the "plunk" of the bullet into the viscera of some "verdomder roibatjes" was the sweetest music that could greet his ears, and seems to imply that the Boers are all like that, a nation of bullies and Bobadils with whom no person of education or kindly feeling could possibly live. But fortunately all are not so. Among the Dutch Boers are many good men and true, whose acquaintance is far more desirable than that of the third-rate loafers calling themselves Englishmen, who are unfortunately only too common in South Africa.

Without patting ourselves on the back as models of magnanimity, Englishmen cherish no real feelings of animosity against the one nation that has in recent times given us a fair and just thrashing; for the Boer war was the most dastardly and unfair conflict we ever engaged in, and we thoroughly deserved the licking we got. Rather are we inclined to respect our whilom conquerors for their strategy and good shooting. On the other hand, the Dutchmen, I believe, thoroughly detest us as a nation; and the more so as they know that their victory cost them more than anything they gained by it. Hundreds of families were ruined, all their cattle and horses being run off with by their own "commandeers," and not a penny of compensation was ever given to the poor sufferers. As the older Boers know well, it was a disastrous war for them as well as for us; and it is gall and bitterness to their souls to think that the very people whom they ostensibly defeated will probably one day be called in to rule them, so that they may not be swindled by their own relations.

In his home life the Boer is slow, calculating, lethargic, roughly-kind, touchy, and conceited; all his geese are swans, and his ways are those of the hard and the just, especially of the hard. The women have to work like slaves when trekking. They gather wood for the fire, and do everything not absolutely directly connected with agriculture or hunting. Then, the Boer is of all people most vacillating, and a proposition discussed and apparently settled round a camp fire is at once shelved and forgotten when a new one is suggested, however wild and ridiculous. Unless, therefore, you know a Dutchman very well, it is unsafe to place any reliance upon his friendship.

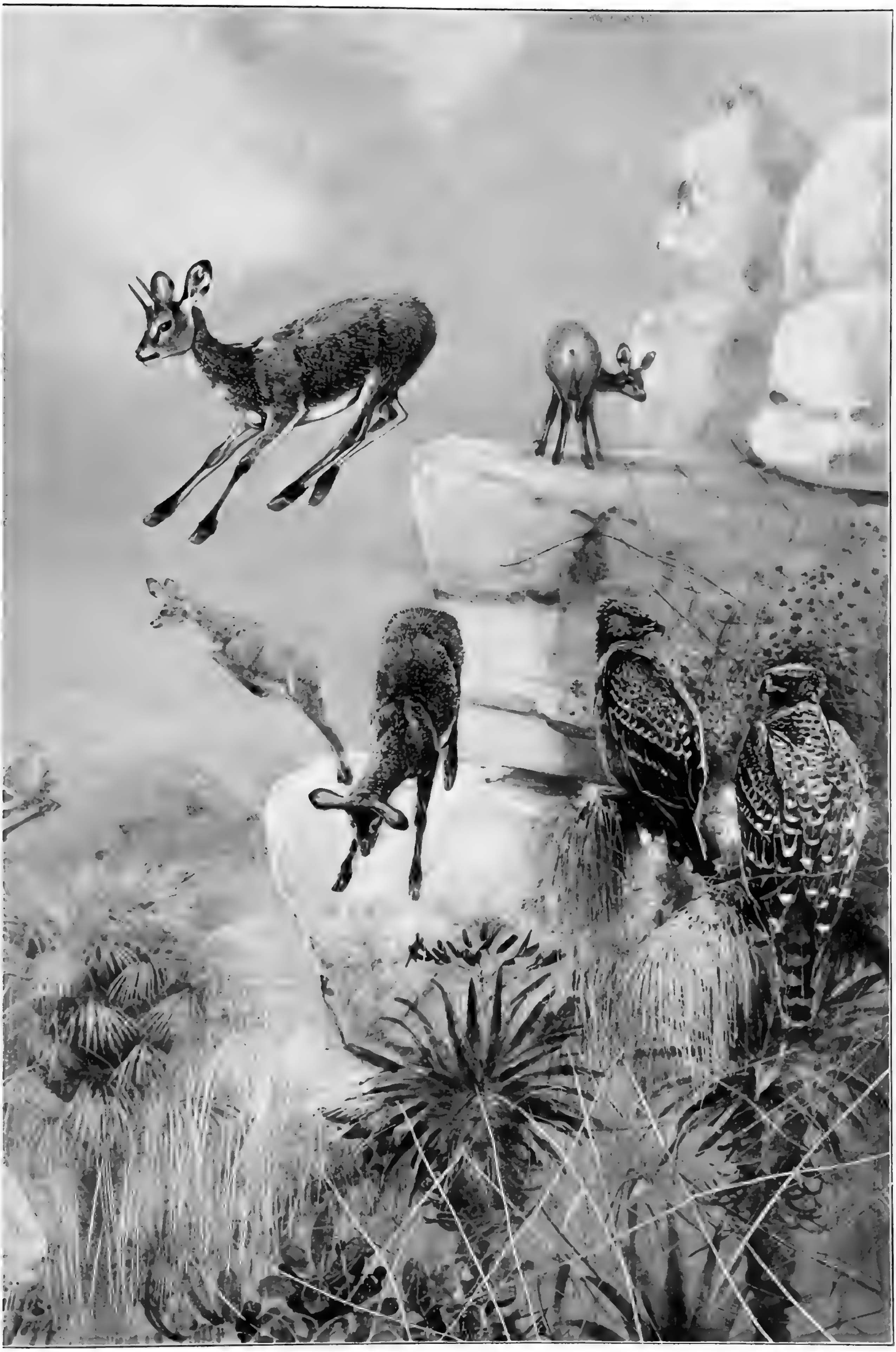
We were now within a day of the Limpopo, and some rocky kopjies on our left raised a hope that there might be some klipspringers frequenting their tops. Five years previously Oom Roelef had seen several here, and though one of the Dutch hunters said he had visited them in vain on the previous day, we still had hopes of finding some, as Dutch information when given to a stranger is generally wrong.


Showing the manner in which the klipspringer stands on its feet when moving over rocks.
J G Millais 1894.

FORE-LEG OF THE KLIPSPRINGER WHEN PLACED ON THE GROUND

The klipbuck, or South African chamois, as it is sometimes called, frequents nearly all the rocky hills from Cape Town to the Zambesi, when not persistently shot at and disturbed. It is a particularly smart and spirited little creature, rather smaller than the chamois, and clothed in one of the most lovely coats imaginable, the hair being long, wiry, and porous, and easily broken. It is of much the same texture as the fur of the North American prong-horned antelope, being a wonderful construction of nature to withstand the extremes of temperature. When the animal is killed in early winter the colour of the hair is particularly beautiful, being black and golden, with little white tips and white under-parts. But the most curious thing about the klipbuck is the shape of its feet and the manner in which it uses them in springing up and down its native rocks ; for it may literally be said to stand on its toes like a ballet dancer. The reader will see from my sketch how the toes are worn square by constant friction on the stones.

It is a beautiful sight to see these animals ascend an almost perpendicular face of rock with their agile and graceful bounds, their common mode of progression reminding one rather of the cool-headed and calculating progress of the mountain sheep than of the chamois, to which they are generally compared.



KLIPBUCKS DESCENDING A KOPJIE

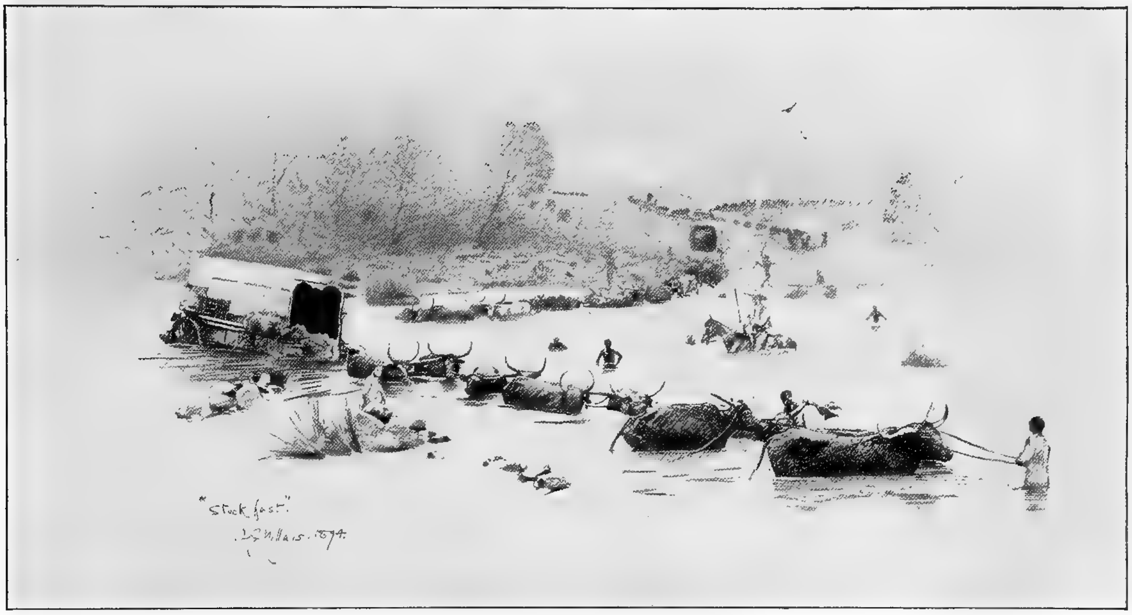
In a country like South Africa, where the chief delight of all rifle-shooters—a difficult stalk in the mountains after a wary animal which has been previously spied—is generally out of the question, the klipbuck occasionally offers chances to the hunter, and its chase is one of the most interesting and exciting from the sportsman's point of view. Its extraordinary quick vision and powers of scent, added to its watchful habits, during the day renders it an exceedingly difficult little animal to kill in fair stalk ; but, like all the antelope tribe, it has a habit of standing to gaze frequently at anything that alarms it, and so contributes to its own destruction. The favourite home of the klipbucks, who commonly go in little parties of from three to eight, are these isolated kopjies, dotted, as they are, all over the face of Northern Transvaal and Mashonaland. In such spots, if the hunter be fortunate enough to find them, he is sure to get one or two pretty shots, as they stand on points and pinnacles before finally dashing down the rocks and leaving the hill for good. Though in itself a lovely little creature, its horns are insignificant, being short and straight like those of the steinbuck ; they are, however, set farther apart on the skull and seldom exceed four inches in length.

Van Staden and I rode past the base of one of these kopjies to the foot of the largest, whose summit was covered with trees, where we left our horses to graze while we proceeded to ascend its slopes. We had not gone twenty yards when, on looking upwards, I saw the heads of two small antelopes appearing over the sky-line above us. I quickly lay down, as I knew they must be klipbucks, and Van Staden did the same, though he had not seen the bucks. One of the two—evidently an old ram, as we could just see the horns—now walked right out on to the point of rock immediately above us, and though the shot was a long one the atmosphere was extremely clear, so I shoved up the 200 yards sight and resolved to have a try, lest no better chance should offer. As I had a nice comfortable position and was quite steady when the rifle went off, I knew the bullet could not have gone far wrong, though the buck disappeared from view almost immediately. We now made all possible haste to ascend the face of the hill ; and precious hot work it was, for hill-climbing under an African sun is no joke. We arrived hot and breathless at the summit, nearly treading on the klipbuck, that sprang up in front of us before I could get my rifle off. He had been lying down a few yards from the spot where I had fired at him, and as one of his hind-legs was broken high up, we saw at once that he would not give us much trouble. However, he made a marvellous descent down the face of a deep kloof above which we now found ourselves, and at the same moment another buck, doubtless his mate, was seen leaping up the rocks on the other side not more than forty yards away. I was waiting for my buck to stand again, as he was still going slowly along the rocks below us, when Van Staden's rifle went off at my side, and the next moment the ewe went flying down the rocks stone dead. By and by the ram stood, and I lay down and took a careful shot at him, when he once more sprang up quickly and disappeared out of sight. After picking up Oom's ewe we were nearly another hour before we found my buck, which had fallen dead down some steep rocks just as he had turned the corner out of our sight. My second bullet had struck him right through the heart, but he had managed to go at least fifty yards from the spot where I had fired at him. All these small African antelope are very tenacious of life, and take more stopping than many of the larger deer of Europe and America.

We were very pleased with our morning's sport, and, before trekking on again, I spent the afternoon in making sketches, and skinning and preserving the buck's head, which was a fine one. In skinning the heads of these bucks the hunter will be greatly struck with the enormous size of the suborbital glands. These masses of oily pulp below the eye (commonly called the tear-ducts) are larger in this animal in proportion to the size of its head than in any other antelope. In the Indian antelope they are also very big, and at certain times of the year swell to an extraordinary degree, emitting a mucous discharge. No particular use has ever been assigned to these ducts in the males of deer and antelopes, but it is known that before and during the rutting season they become much inflamed.

2nd June.—Thank Heavens, the Limpopo at last! This fine stream, with its bed of sand and its fringe of great trees has been so often described that I will not weary my readers with any further account of it. We arrived just as some thirty transport waggons, all heavily laden with goods for Victoria and Salisbury, were making the passage of the river; and a thoroughly inspiriting and truly South African scene it was: the yellow sandbanks glaring in the sun, the blue waters, the straining oxen, dragging at their burdens with but their necks and shoulders above the water; while the Natal Zulus, immersed up to their shoulders, swung their great ox-whips and yelled and swore prodigiously while driving their patient and willing teams to the farther bank. The sand is deep in the bed of the Limpopo, and the river bank rises high out of the stream; the crossing is consequently a heavy pull for oxen; so double spanning (thirty-four to forty oxen to each waggon) is generally the order of the day.

As the grass by the river was bad, we intended to make another trek as soon as we got across, so we did not waste much time at the Police Camp, where, after discussing the prospects of game, we got our licences from Sergeant Chawner, a most kind and civil man, who rendered me every assistance in his power. Whatever the newspapers may say about the fine climate of Mashonaland, the police at these drifts have a hard time of it in the spring. All of them had been down with fever more or less this year, and Chawner himself was very weak and looking dreadfully ill, poor fellow. All the men who have had much experience in this country tell the same tale—that the high plateaux like Buluwayo, Salisbury, and Umtale are healthy at all seasons, provided ordinary care be taken, but that nine-tenths of the rest of the country is quite useless to the white man save for prospecting on the chance of finding another Johannesburg. As we pulled away from the drift a poor fellow was lying under a bush evidently in a dying condition; he had got fever up in Victoria, and three of his boys had died since starting, owing to their trying to move about too soon after the rains. He pays the price that many a poor fellow has done before in South Africa, throwing away his life for the sake of making an extra trip with a few sovereigns at the end of it.


"Stuck fast."
J. G. Millais. 1894.

WAGGONS CROSSING A RIVER

Oom's two sons evidently considered that I had done something extraordinary in getting them past the river without their detention in prison, or something happening to them, and their spirits rose to the highest summit of good-nature that they ever reached—which, by the way, was not very lofty. After an elephantine fashion, they made themselves as agreeable as possible, and one of them even attempted a joke that made me feel sorry for him. As I had never cherished any ill-will against them, but only on occasion felt exasperated at their laziness and ignorance, I could forgive them everything else but that.

Three o'clock the same day brought us to the M'zingwani River; and here Spotty, the strongest of my ponies, showed undoubted signs of horse-sickness. Providence, however, was very kind both to Spotty and myself, for after being taken care of for three weeks he quite recovered, and turned out a genuine salted horse. After a good meal of klipbuck and tea we all went for a hunt, and as usual saw nothing but spoor. Tace, however, was fortunate enough to kill a young koodoo bull. He and Hert, I notice, are very jealous of each other, and sit and sulk like a couple of big babies when any question of their respective superiority as hunters comes up. They are also both rather amusing—when they least intend to be—essaying to give Piet and me lessons in venery, to which we listen respectfully while quietly laughing in our sleeves.

In the evening a lot of thin-legged, hungry-looking wretches of some coloured mongrel tribe came and brought some delicious melons, which were especially welcome, as well as some milk. One of them had an old Brown Bess, with "V.R. Tower, 1836" engraved on it. I had just finished making a sketch of him that I rather fancied, when the scoundrel caught sight of what I was doing and picked up his blunderbuss, assegais, etc., and bolted.

On the M'zingwani are many beautiful and interesting birds. There we see for the first time the magnificent white-headed screaming eagle. These splendid creatures are frequently to be seen soaring in great circles about the pools in South African streams containing fish. The sun shines brilliantly on the dazzling whiteness of their heads, necks, and tails, and gives them a thoroughly noble appearance. In all their habits and ways, as far as I could observe, they most closely resemble the white-tailed sea eagle, or erne of Europe, but they are somewhat more slightly built and get on the wing in less clumsy fashion. Their mode of fishing is similar, as I had one morning a fine opportunity for seeing when one of them pounced on a large "barber"[1] at a pool by the Bubye. The eagle settled on a dead branch overhanging the water within 100 yards of my waggon as I was having breakfast, so I quietly got out my telescope to observe him, and had hardly done so when he once more threw himself into space, his sharp eye having detected the "swirl" of a large fish on the surface of the pool. After sailing in a half circle he took a headlong downward dash, striking the water with a splash that could have been heard 500 yards away, and apparently seized the head of his prey, which he drew from the water glistening with drops. I have seen the white-tailed eagle in Iceland similarly strike and catch a five-pound trout, and have often thought how curious it is that an agile-darting fish is unable to escape the clumsy dash—for clumsy it undoubtedly is—of these great birds. Possibly some such terror overcomes the mind of the fish as that of the small bird that allows itself to be fascinated and captured by a snake, or it may be that from the position of the fish's eyes it is unable to observe anything descending from directly above.

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[1] The Silurus.

The beautiful little pied kingfisher is also quite common here, and may be seen taking its little headers after small fry in the various pools. African winter mornings are still, cool, and delightful, and as the hunter sits at breakfast, camped beside one of the rivers or streams of the Interior, the "plop" of these little birds as they follow one another in their morning quest for food is one of the most familiar sounds. This kingfisher is the common one in South Africa; there are also two others occasionally seen—the great blue and brown, and a little bird about half the size of ours, a perfect turquoise gem.

Then one sees the lovely snow-white stork with black head and neck (*Mycteria senegalensis*), and the roller, probably the most beautiful bird South Africa possesses. Its harmony of colour is one of the most lovely things in nature; and to see a pair of these beetle-hunters playing in the evening sun is indeed an enjoyment. The hen bird sits on some dead branch at the top of an old tree, whilst the male flies round her and performs some of those aerial headers so common to the birds of this wild country.

Last night (6th June) there were encamped by us four half-caste hunters, named Boase. They were old and well-known friends of Oom Roelef, for it was with one of them that my companion had taken his first trip to Mashonaland twenty years ago. All were fine men, too, the eldest particularly so, standing over six feet two and with the pleasantest expression imaginable stamped upon his face. These four men were the sons of an English hunter who had been outlawed for some offence, and who, having taken refuge in the recesses of the Zoutpansberg, had there married a black woman and hunted for a living in the country to the north. He and his sons were amongst the first to cross into Mashonaland, which in those days was even more unhealthy than it is at present; and the father paid the penalty of his daring, falling a victim to the climate as many another man has done since. Since then the brothers (seldom parted) have made annual trips into Eastern Mashonaland, which they probably know better than any men living. They were particularly agreeable and polite for men of a half-black caste, and Oom Roelef said they were quite as good as they seemed, which was in itself a guarantee.

What made our meeting with the Boases particularly interesting was the fact that the elder brother was the very man who had given Van Staden the information about the white rhinoceros' drinking-pool on the previous year. They had been encamped at a brackish pan on the edge of the Thirstland south of the Lundi, being unable because of "fly" to "stand" on that river, where they were hunting hippopotami; and as their waggons were already full, they did not take up the spoor of a white rhinoceros that had come regularly at night to drink at the end of the pan.

Boase the elder now proceeded to give us a minute description of the country, and to point out how we could best reach it across country from the Nuanetsi, which was our hunting district for the larger antelopes, and where we hoped also to fall in with buffalo. In fact he did everything to assist us, and would have come on with us, as I wished him to do, had not he been at the time burdened with a heavy load of transport from Victoria to Pietersberg, which he was unable to leave. He was so eloquent and interesting in his descriptions of the various wild beasts he assured us we should get if we entered the "fly" that I lay awake all night thinking about it.

At mid-day we trekked on to the M'zingwani drift, after saying good-bye to the Boases, to the elder of whom I made a present for his information. There we found many rhinoceros birds, and I spent the afternoon sketching them and their interesting ways. In the evening on we went again till nearly midnight, and had to outspan in the bush, where there was no water. Nor were we any better off in this respect on the following day, when we trekked on to Gong on the edge of Matabeleland. It is a heavy route for oxen, demanding a whole day, and no water to be met with on the way.

Leaving the waggons at mid-day, Oom and I determined to hunt on to the water-pools at Gong, in the hope of picking up something or other. I had got a bit tired of going out day after day and seeing nothing, for my companion and myself had done so unremittingly since the Zoutpansberg, and had only seen a koodoo cow, some wart-hogs, and a couple of klipbucks! However, though still hopeful, as a hunter must ever be if he means to enjoy himself, I must confess I was a bit disappointed at seeing so little game in the large tract of country we had daily worked over. And now, this very day (6th June), we had our reward. It was a real red-letter day for me, and one I thoroughly enjoyed; for a koodoo bull—the first I ever killed—fell to my rifle. And who can ever forget the happiness of a moment like that?

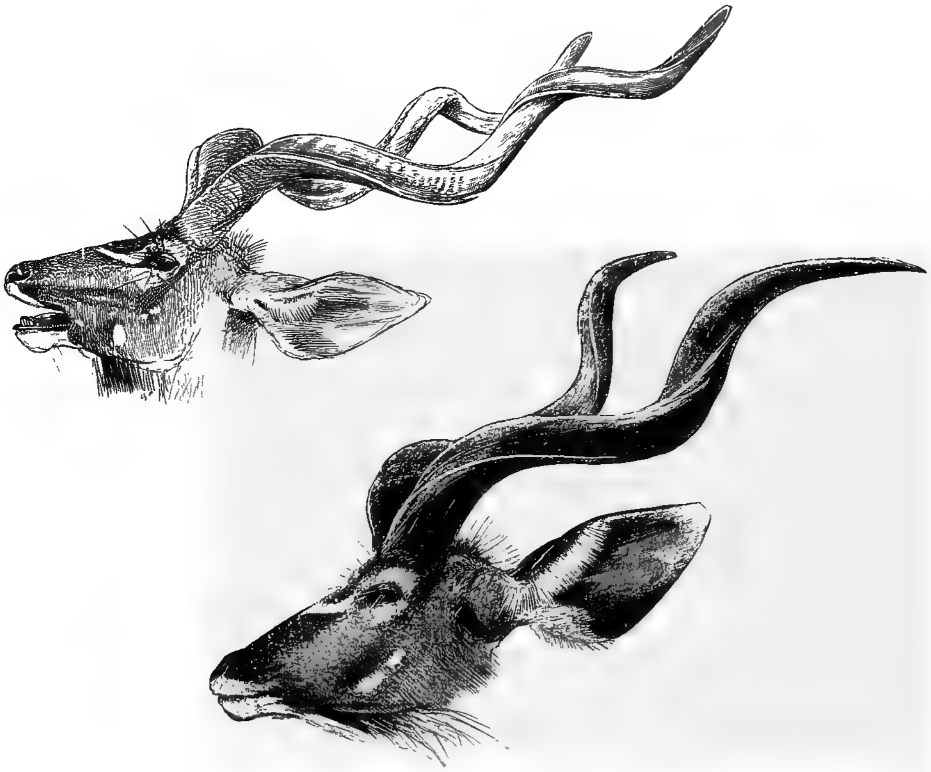
The country of Mashonaland now became far more interesting from a sporting point of view, for there began to appear those great open grass plains, dotted with clumps of dense "wait-a-bit" through which no man or horse could force himself, and which are especially dear to the heart of the koodoo.

In point of beauty there can be no doubt that the koodoo is the first of antelopes; but in my humble estimation, after having seen and shot several of both species, this grand beast lacks the noble presence of the scimitar-horned sable antelope. The head of the koodoo, seen on the walls of a room, is certainly more pleasing to the eye, and most men would probably favour the fine stuffed specimen in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, rejoicing in the glory of its coquettish beauty on a bold headland, and looking the master of all it surveys, in preference to the sable, which ambles beside its mate in the humble plains of a glass case close by. But in nature things are somewhat different. The animals have to get along without glass cases, and their movement, habit, and surroundings count for something.

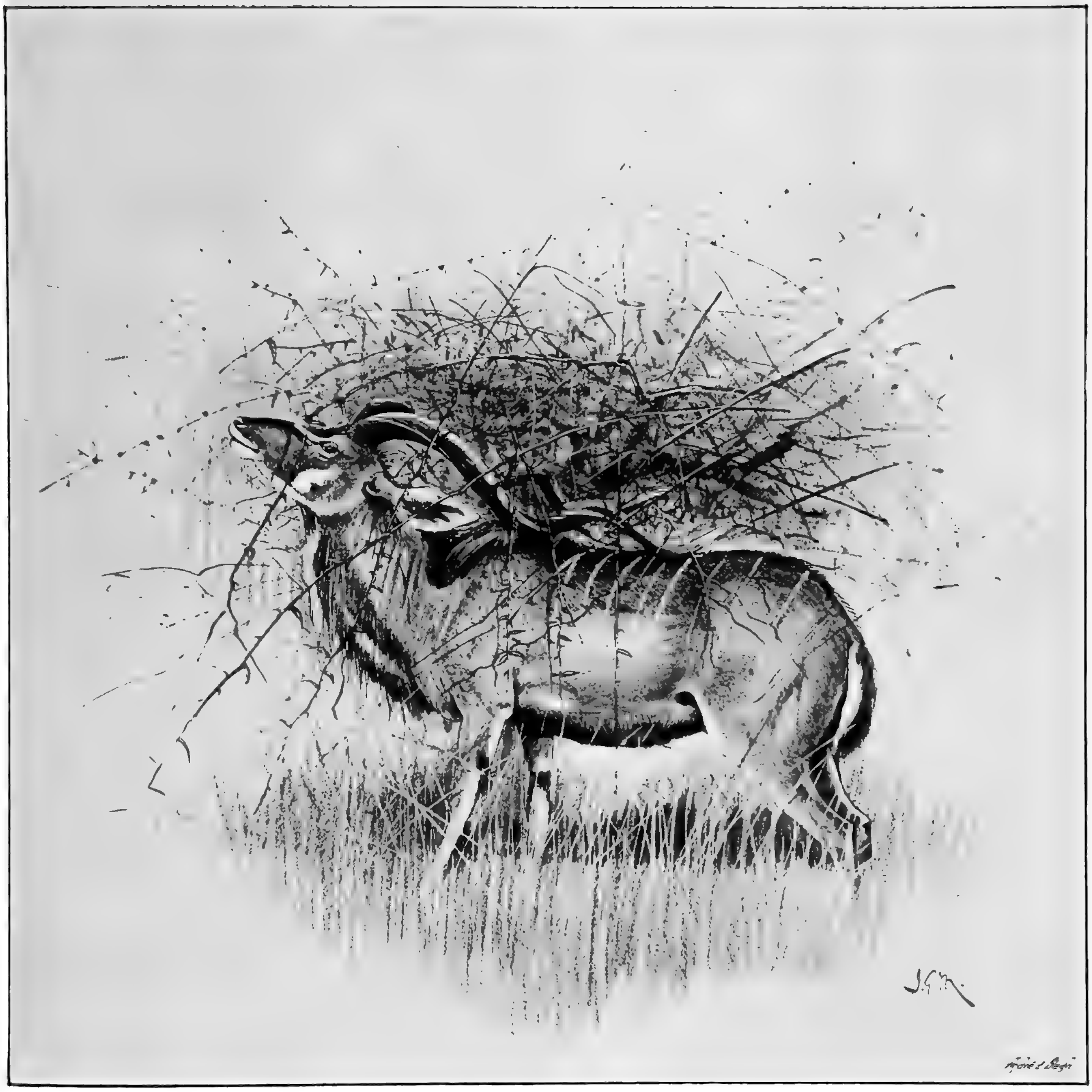
It is the koodoo who is wary, timid, retiring, and humble, and who seldom trusts himself to gaze at you for more than a moment, and then generally from the umbrageous shadow of some dense thicket of wait-a-bit, from which, dashing away with a white whisk of his tail and with horns laid almost on his back (not exactly *a la* "Monarch of the Glen"), retires as quickly and quietly as possible, only perhaps to yield up his frail hold on life with but one poor struggle. How different the sable! "Grand" and "royal" are the only epithets the hunter would apply to him when he faces an old buck for the first time. The way he carries his head is superb; and the whole bearing of the animal shows that he is proud of himself, and will fight to the last and die hard—as in fact he always does.

Naturalists and sportsmen may rejoice that the koodoo holds his own so well, and will do so probably long after all the rest of the big game south of the Zambesi has gone, unless some definite move be at once made towards the formation of the National South African Park, which has already begun to be discussed.

Though the species is gone from the countries south of the Transvaal, there is still a fair number in the northern forests of that country, and these are not confined to "a few troops which still linger," as most books on the subject would give us to understand. The fact is, very little hunting goes on in these countries, owing to absence of water and thickness of the bush ; the amount of game still to be found there cannot therefore be very much less than in the greater part of Mashonaland, which is very much hunted. The following speaks for itself. Each of the four hunters whom I trekked up with killed on an average ten koodoos in three months, besides a lot of pallah and blue wildebeests ; and this too, in every instance, close to the main road in the Transvaal. If then they could do this, there must surely be a very fair quantity of game in the hundreds of untrodden miles in the south-west and east of the several drifts of the Limpopo. In Mashonaland the koodoo is probably only reduced in numbers near the transport roads, while still plentiful in the neighbourhood of all the rivers and pans of that country where the bush is suitable to its habits.



HEADS OF YOUNG AND OLD KOODOO BULLS


J.G.M.
André & Sleigh

KOODOO BULL ENDEAVOURING TO ESCAPE NOTICE BY ASSIMILATION TO SURROUNDINGS

Much has already been written of the beauty and grace of this magnificent antelope and the sport it affords, so I shall give only a few notes of them which I made with pen and pencil on the spot.

Where undisturbed, the koodoo, like the roan antelope, comes to water regularly at the same spots about the same time in the evening, *i.e.* an hour before sundown. If, however, troops, which generally consist of from six to ten cows and a bull, have been disturbed, they change their watering hours to daybreak, and at such times approach the water very cautiously. Most of the year the old bulls go solitary or in pairs, and wander great distances from the water, whereas the cows never go any great distance, but hang about in the low rocky kopjies in the vicinity. At times even the bulls are gregarious. A Dutch hunter told me he had once encountered thirty in one troop in the month of August.

If a koodoo bull be found in open country, a hunter mounted on a good horse ought certainly to bag him provided the pace be forced at first, as the animal seems to tire sooner than any of the larger antelope except the eland. Such a chase is, however, not too common, as an old koodoo bull, even where they are numerous, is difficult to find, on account of his hiding propensities, the great distance he goes from the water, and his fondness for always sticking to the thickest wait-a-bit. Once on the move, the koodoo get through these thorns in a marvellous way ; they never seem to get caught or hung up, as a man on horseback would certainly be were he to attempt to follow their course, to say nothing of the laceration he would receive. My illustration of a troop on the move going through bush will give the reader a better idea of the motion of these animals under such circumstances than any mere words of mine.

The alarm call of the koodoo is a loud roaring bark not unlike that of the baboon, only much louder. It is said to give vent to it only when it winds a man close by without seeing him. All the Dutch hunters maintain that the old bull koodoo will sometimes hide himself under a bush, even lying down and placing his head so as to rest his horns along his back, in order to avoid being seen. I have not the least doubt that this is true, and that they will allow the hunter to walk past them within a few yards, as Van Staden said he had once killed one under such circumstances.

A ride of about three hours brought us to the base of a high kopjie, from the summit of which we intended to have a spy, as I had brought my telescope for the purpose, though I did not, as a rule, use it ; indeed the hunter will but rarely find it of use away from his waggon. On our way we had seen two koodoo cows, but they disappeared in the thick bush without giving us a chance. We saw too for the first time some spoor of ostrich and roan antelope quite fresh, and so began at last to feel in touch with the animals we had come to hunt.

From the top of this kopjie a splendid panorama of the country spreads itself north to Victoria and eastwards to the Michelsfontein ; so we sat long while our horses grazed beneath, alternately admiring the prospect and scanning likely bits of bush with the glass. A big troop of guinea-fowls now moved past the base of the kopjie, following each other in their afternoon trek to the water, and I had a fine opportunity for observing their manœuvres whilst on the move. At length, tired of inaction, we determined to make for the water, which we hoped to reach at sunset.

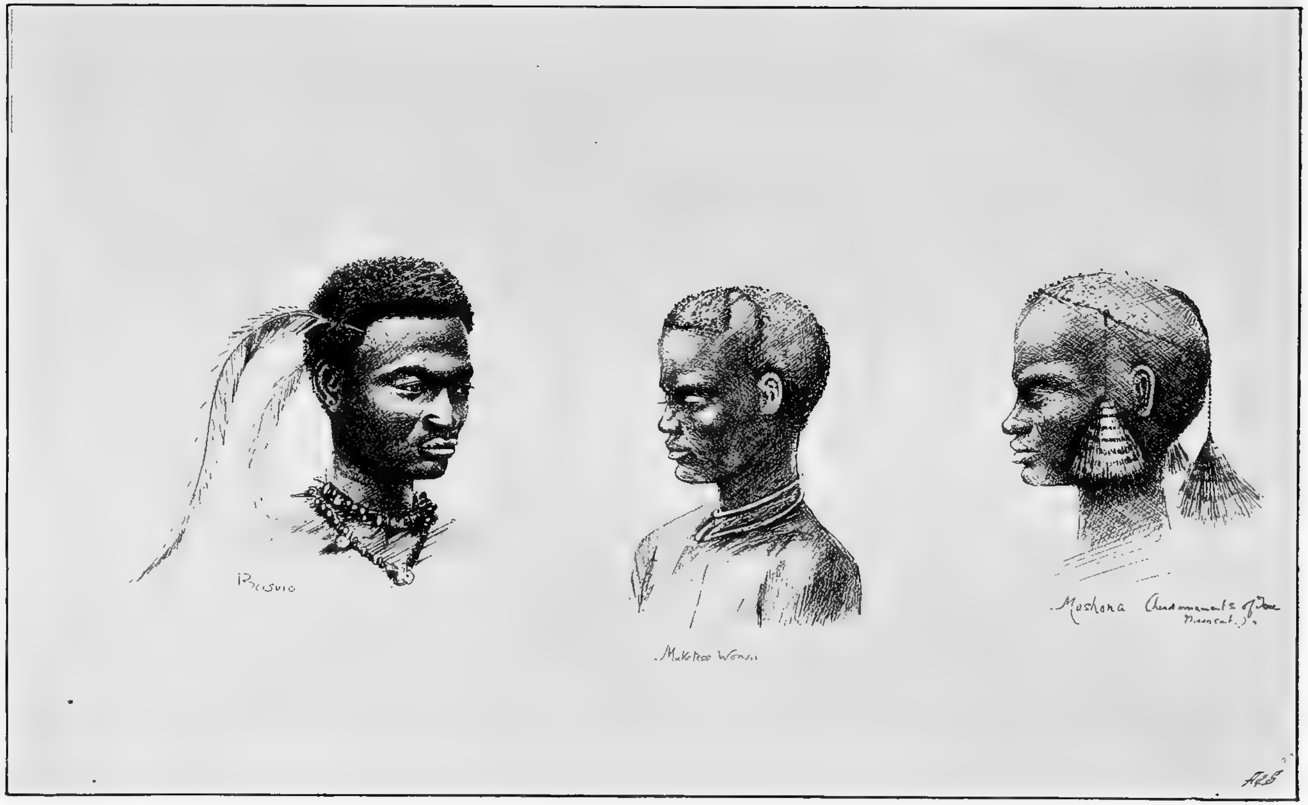
Another long ride of two hours brought us in face of the first dense patches of bush near the water, where the partridges and brown red-necked francolins were already starting their usual evening screeching ; and Oom, pointing downwards, called my attention to the fresh spoor and droppings of a troop of koodoo. It was so fresh that we decided to follow it as far as we could, and had hardly set our horses in motion when we observed the last of the troop, an old cow, entering a patch of bush close to the water, 300 yards immediately in front of us. Most of the country round us was so open that we felt we fairly had them on easy terms, and my heart beat high in expectation of there being a bull amongst them.

My companion now took a line parallel to the animals, and after pursuing it along the edge of the thicket, we presently saw the whole lot—seven cows—walking quietly within 100 yards of us. They at once started away with great bounds, switching their snowy tails amid the dark thorn-trees. And now our plan was to make them break cover, driving them into the open ; but this they refused to do, preferring to stand together in a bunch outside the last few trees, and evidently not having made up their minds which line to take. I was much disappointed at not seeing a bull, so I let Oom take the first shot, as I knew he was sure of getting his meat, which he much needed, whilst I stood on a mound in the middle of the bush to intercept the animals if they broke across from the cover again. A loud " whack " on an old cow's ribs proclaimed the success of my companion's shot, and the whole troop came slowly across me, whilst I withheld my fire till they stopped. They stood badly for me, and the first at which I fired whirled round and made off with the rest, just as a splendid bull rose out of the thorns within thirty yards of me and dashed after them with his horns resting almost on his back. For the moment I could almost have thrown my rifle away with vexation at having fired at the cow, as its single barrel was now empty ; but, joy of joys ! there occurred one of those extraordinary pieces of good fortune which at one time or another falls to the lot of every hunter if he perseveres long enough. A moment afterwards, as the whole troop were leisurely disappearing over the brow on the broken ground in front and I was about to turn round and jump on Jimmy to start in pursuit, there was a sudden consternation amongst their ranks, and the whole troop suddenly split up, flying with great bounds in every direction. I could not understand this sudden terror, and had only just time to cram in another cartridge and get ready, when the bull and a cow came dashing back through the bush straight towards me. It all seemed like a dream for a moment—just as I was lamenting my ill luck too ! For big animals, I never saw such activity as these two bucks displayed ; though they saw me plainly, they were evidently more terrified of some other object right in front of them. When within thirty yards of me they bounded over bushes that I had never thought such large animals capable of negotiating, and as the bull passed me within ten yards, I put a bullet into him. The effect of the shot, though taken rather far back and too high, was instantaneous ; he gave up his life almost without a kick, falling in a heap on his knees and rolling over dead. I need hardly say how delighted I was at obtaining my coveted prize, and Oom, who was equally pleased, could hardly drag me away from the carcase to look for the beast which he himself had wounded. We found plenty of blood by following the spoor through some dense wait-a-bit which played havoc with our clothes and tempers, and presently came upon the dead body of a fine cow, which, much to our surprise, proved to be mine instead of my companion's, by the small bullet-hole through the neck. Now was the terror of the animals easily explained : they had all been running away together when this cow, which had evidently been leading, had fallen dead, and so frightened them all out of their wits ; for if there is one thing more than another that startles wild animals, it is to have their guide shot. It was then that the wary old bull, who had evidently been in hiding till the last moment, came back and gave me a chance such as hunters seldom obtain. He would doubtless have got off scatheless but for my somewhat fluky shot at the cow.

We now continued on the spoor of the troop, knowing full well that Oom's cow could not possibly be far off, for I had myself seen her floundering through the bush after the retreating herd, and knew that she was about done for ; but the denseness of the thorns was so great that we had to creep on hands and knees to get through most of it, regardless of the awful little hooks and daggers with which the ground was carpeted. However, just as we were about to give it up for the night, for the sun was now setting, we stumbled across her spoor doubling back in a spot that had several times puzzled us. Here after some trouble we found her lying within 200 yards of my cow ; so all three animals were, after all, close together. It was late when the beasts were grallocked, and would have been later still had not Tace unexpectedly turned up and lent us a hand in cleaning and covering the carcases for the night, to keep off hyænas, lions, and vultures.

We were all pretty tired, but jolly, that night at supper, and spent the whole of the next day in getting the animals home. A perfect crowd of vultures rose from one of the koodoo cows as we approached, showing plainly that some animal had been at work at one of the carcases. This proved to have been two hyænas, which had eaten half of Oom's cow, whilst the vultures had finished the rest ; so there was little left to carry away. The other two beasts were untouched ; but we were, I fancy, only just in time to secure them, for the large number of vultures in the air had attracted other visitors to the scene of the previous day's sport. Just as Oom and I arrived (for we had come on foot, and the day was sweltering) a party of natives suddenly appeared. There were about twelve of them, all splendid men, some being strikingly handsome and well armed. Oom said they were "Kall Kaffirs," the Dutch appellation for Matabele. He was evidently right, for more overbearing or objectionable black men I never met. This was just about the beginning of the Matabele row ; and as we had all been warned against these people, we thought it best to adopt conciliatory measures by appealing to their stomachs. Without much ado they told us we must trek and go back to the Transvaal, as the Matabele intended to clear every white man out of Mashonaland during the following six months. I have not a doubt it was these brutes who came a few nights later and murdered six poor defenceless Basutos within a few hundred yards of Frau Van Staden's camp, at the same time making things so hot for her that she was glad to get clear with her sons back into Transvaal.

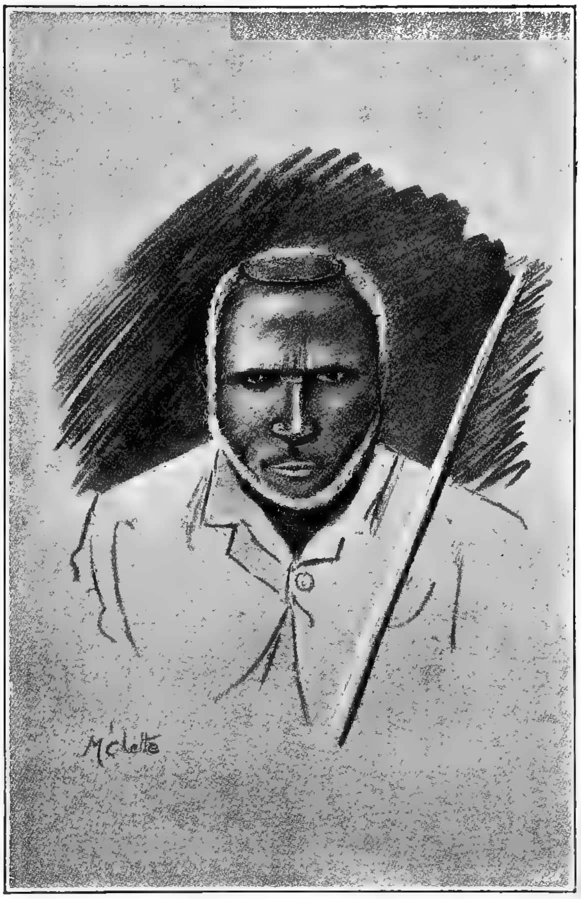
The day after our leaving Gong a war-party of slave-hunting Matabele came there and drove out five hunters who were following immediately behind us ; so we were really lucky to get away to the east as we did. A few weeks later the whole of this country was in a ferment, and what happened on the breaking out of war is now generally known. It was a war that was bound to


Basuto
Mukatese Woman
Mashona (Ornaments of face Nascal.)
ALS

NATIVE TYPES

come in any case; for ever since the entrance of the British South Africa Company, the Matabele had been as a thorn in their side that must be got rid of before any advance could be made in Mashonaland and the countries to the north. The rights and wrongs of that war have been freely discussed, deprecated by extreme sentimentalists who never had to deal with a black man, and boomed by those whose business it was to try and make a sort of hybrid Golconda and Arcadia of lands which, with the exception of certain tracts, are at present about as useless to the white man as the Desert of Sahara. On the whole, however, it was only one step more towards the civilisation of Africa, and the putting an end for ever to the last remaining savage Power in South Africa, whose doings have long been a byword for wholesale bloodshed and murder.

Of the six most characteristic types of the native races of South Africa my readers may perhaps gain some superficial idea from the accompanying sketches, taken direct from nature. Both physically and mentally the pure Zulu is far ahead of all the other tribes either here or elsewhere, the higher type of the Matabele only excepted. Though still the true savage in barbaric cruelty and love of shedding blood, there is much in his nature that savours of the old days of chivalry. There is also a certain amount of poetry in his composition, enabling him to follow, however imperfectly, the higher flights of the white man's imagination, which the low type of humanity presented by nearly all other African natives can never reach. His good qualities are numerous—such as great bravery, incessant cheerfulness, personal cleanliness, and honesty and faithfulness to a master whom he respects and loves.



"UMSHETI"

With him may be classed a few Matabele such as I have referred to above

—men who sprang originally from the best stock in Zululand, but have now got pretty well mixed by intermarriage with other tribes. A good example, and a very fine type of cranial development, is shown in "Umsheti," Lobengula's Prime Minister. His is a face of great intelligence and character. The rough sketch I give of him was done from nature; and a tough job I had to get the old man to sit still or look at me. Suffering badly from indigestion at the time, he was not in the most heavenly of tempers, so I had more than ordinary trouble to get anything like a fair presentment of his fine head.

Next in the downward grade one would class the pure Basuto, together with a large number of other tribes which vary enormously from types quite as fine as the Zulus, down to a much lower form. In this class may be placed the M'Pochs and Shangans (who are really sub-branches of the Zulus), the M'Yambans, the Amatongas, the Swazis and Bamangwato.

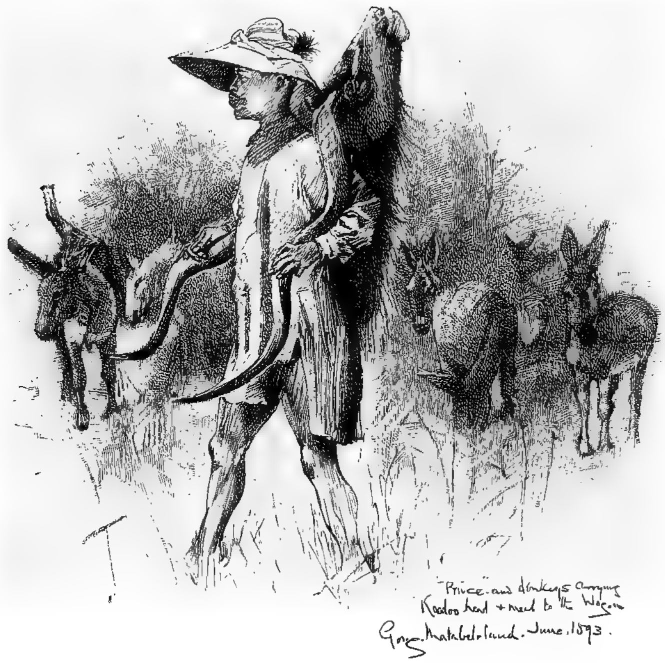
Thirdly comes a much lower type again—the Maketese; and then the Mashunas, a race altogether mongrel and mixed, for there is no such thing as a pure Mashuna.

The Hottentots seem to form a distinct branch all to themselves, with their yellow skins and short, well-made bodies. Their intelligence far surpasses that of any of the native races, though they too often lack the honesty and faithfulness which are such fine attributes of the better type of black man.

Then come the Ovampos, Damaras, and Masarwa bushmen of the Kalahari; and finally, the old colony bushmen, now well-nigh extinct, whose cranial development and modes of life are of so low a type that one can readily accept Darwin's theory of their affinity to the Anthropoid apes.

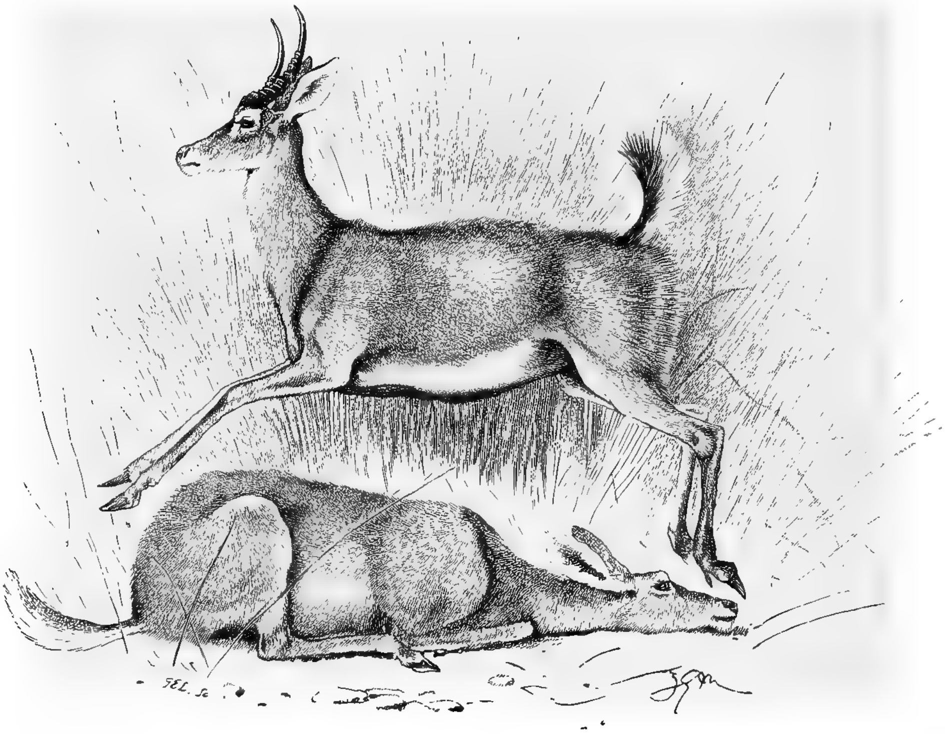
Whilst returning from the koodoos with the donkeys we found a good deal of fresh spoor of the reedbuck, and after working all the afternoon homewards, an old ewe of this species sprang up close to Oom and galloped away, heading, as is their wont, straight away from the reeds for the bush. She was still going at full speed when the old hunter fired at her; and a prettier shot with the rifle I never witnessed, for the bullet struck her fairly in the middle of her back and caused her to turn a complete somersault, like a shot rabbit. Prince and I put down our rifles and applauded the old man loudly, at which I fancy he was much pleased, though too modest to say so. If he had been an ordinary Dutchman he would have told you he did that sort of thing every time. Now shooting any of these South African antelopes on the move is a decidedly difficult feat, unless they are very near and very big. They advance by a series of great bounds, very different from the machine-like trot of deer. Moreover, none of them gallop absolutely straight away from the shooter, but each separate bound is made more or less to one side or the other as the animal chooses its ground; so a galloping shot at 100 yards at a small buck is really something to be proud of when the bullet finds its billet.

The reedbuck (*Cervicapra arundineum*) is still found in fair numbers in Mashonaland, but only in the more isolated hunting-grounds of to-day. Since it is both the tamest and easiest buck in South Africa to approach and kill, and it frequents the dry grass sluits in the vicinity of water, where waggons are bound to stand, one cannot but fear that its days are numbered. Except here and there one, it has already disappeared from the Transvaal and southern countries. It is a graceful antelope, about midway in size between a roe and a fallow deer, and possessed of a long rufous coat, with white under-parts and a pair of the most lovely eyes in existence. In moments of alarm the ears are thrown forward to an unusual extent, and the nose, when seen in profile, presents a curious ridge-like excrescence not yet found in the taxidermic establishments of Piccadilly, Wardour Street, or Camden Town.


"Prince" and donkeys carrying
Koodoo head + meat to the Waggon
Geo. Matabeleland. June, 1893.

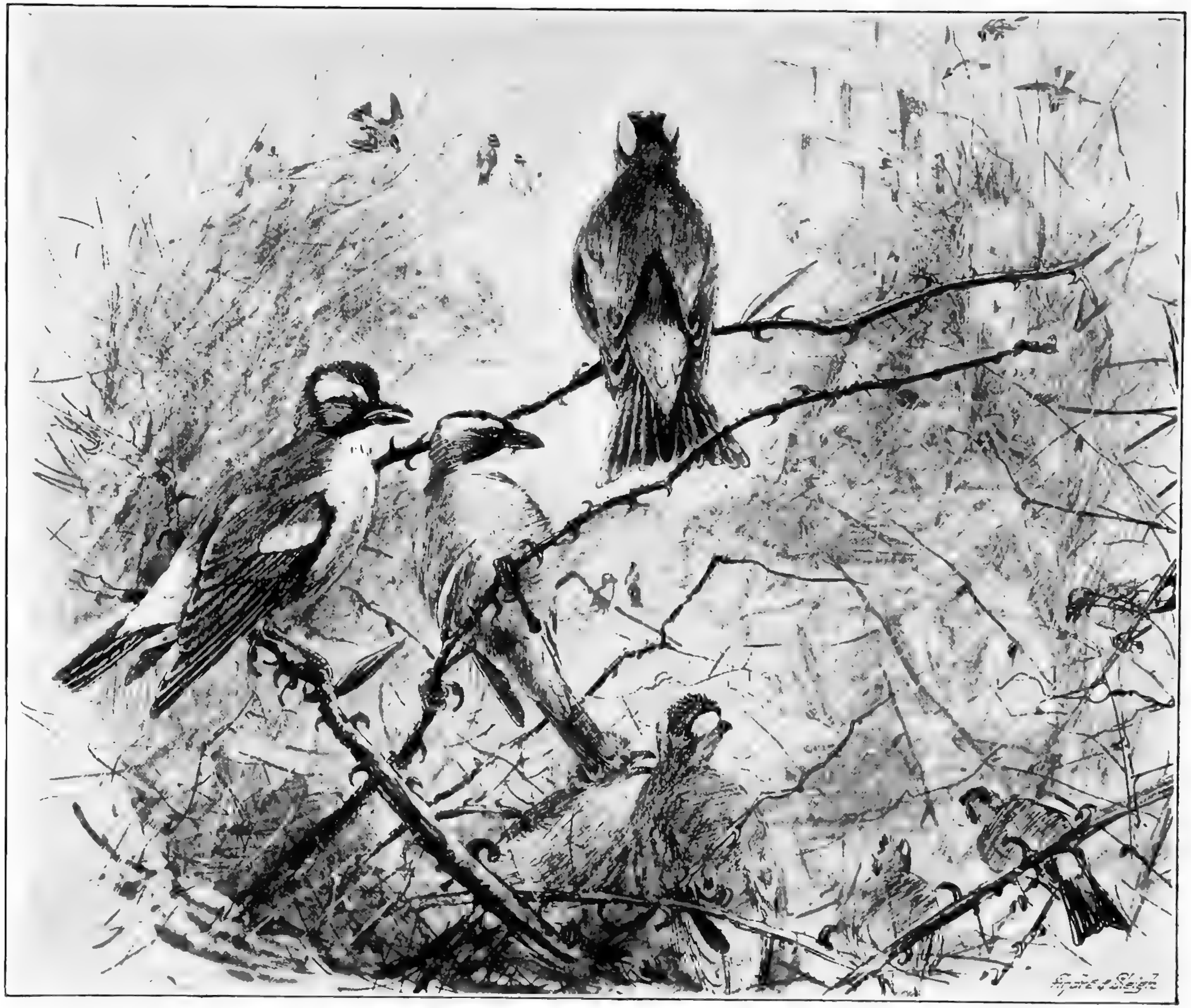
PRINCE AND DONKEYS CARRYING GAME TO WAGGON

Though elegant in form, this buck is but a poor mover. It commonly moves in a long rolling gallop, keeping up the same pace over either very good or very bad ground, and it always heads right away with its mate from the reeds, where it is generally found, to the sanctuary of the bush. Should the bush not be thick it is not a difficult animal to run up to, as it tires almost sooner than any of the species. Reedbucks, particularly the females, will lie very close, like rabbits, and if suddenly alarmed they squat flat on the ground, as I had one day a good opportunity for seeing. He, therefore, who desires to shoot a couple of heads of this buck will often have to work hard for days in the dry sluits, with both gun and rifle, even though the bucks be fairly numerous. If found in a very large water-course, the reedbuck will often not leave the open grass, but will run for half a mile or so and then stand and gaze back at his pursuer. The sportsman should keep out of sight as much as possible, and then he may probably be rewarded by seeing his game again squat, when he can walk right up to him. The animal is, I fancy, fond of feeding and moving about at night; for at a point between the Nuanetsi and Lundi rivers, at which I afterwards camped, hardly a day passed without hearing the loud whistles of these bucks at all hours of the night as they passed close to the waggon.



THE REEDBUCK IN TWO ATTITUDES OF ALARM

At Gong we stayed for six days, while the Dutchmen were discussing the

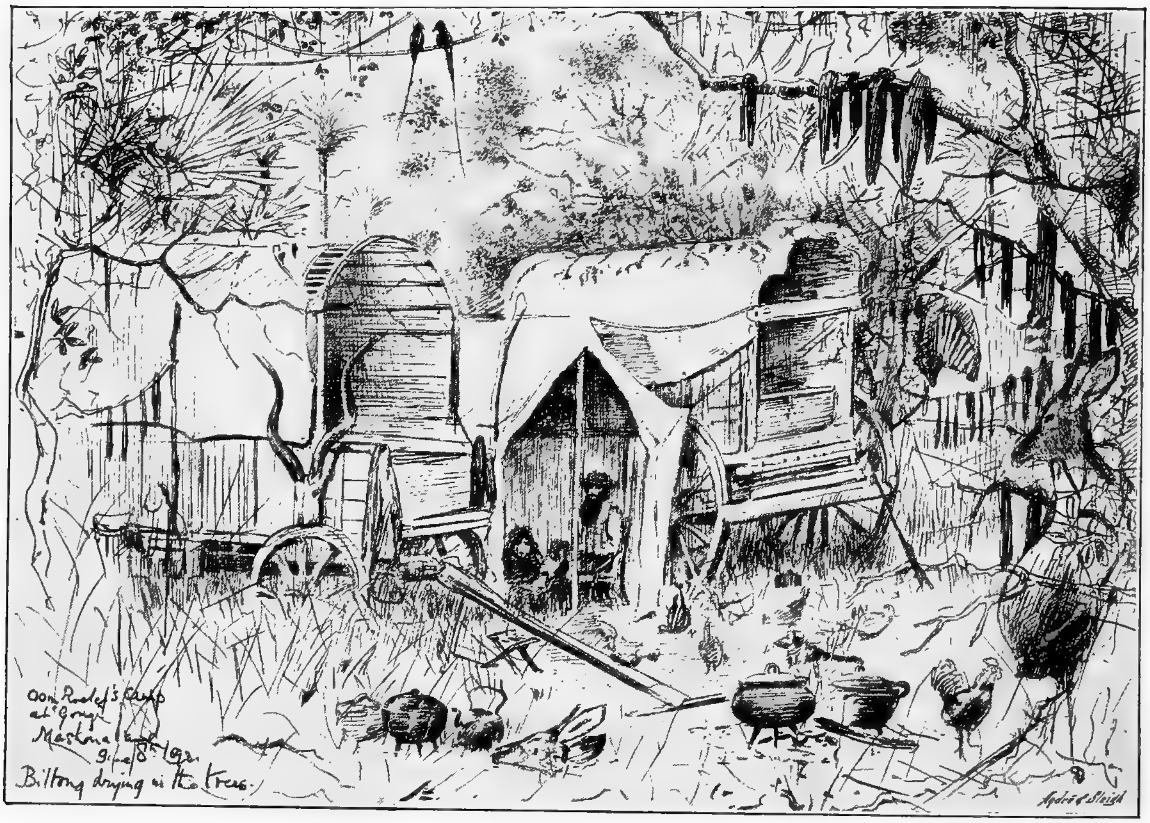


BLACK-CROWNED WEAVER BIRDS

situation, and having finally settled to leave Frau Van Staden and her family for the next few months, we all trekked eastward to the Nuanetsi. During these days we hunted hard, every man of us, to try and get enough meat to keep the old lady and her family till Hert and Petrus should return, as they were to accompany us for some distance and then go back to stay and take care of her. All the Dutchmen were fairly successful, Petrus particularly so, killing in the four days one koodoo bull and one cow, and three waterbuck ewes; whilst Tace got two koodoo cows, the old man two steinbucks, and myself and Hert nothing but an old wart-hog, with which I was particularly pleased, though the others did not think much of it as they could not convert it into "biltung."

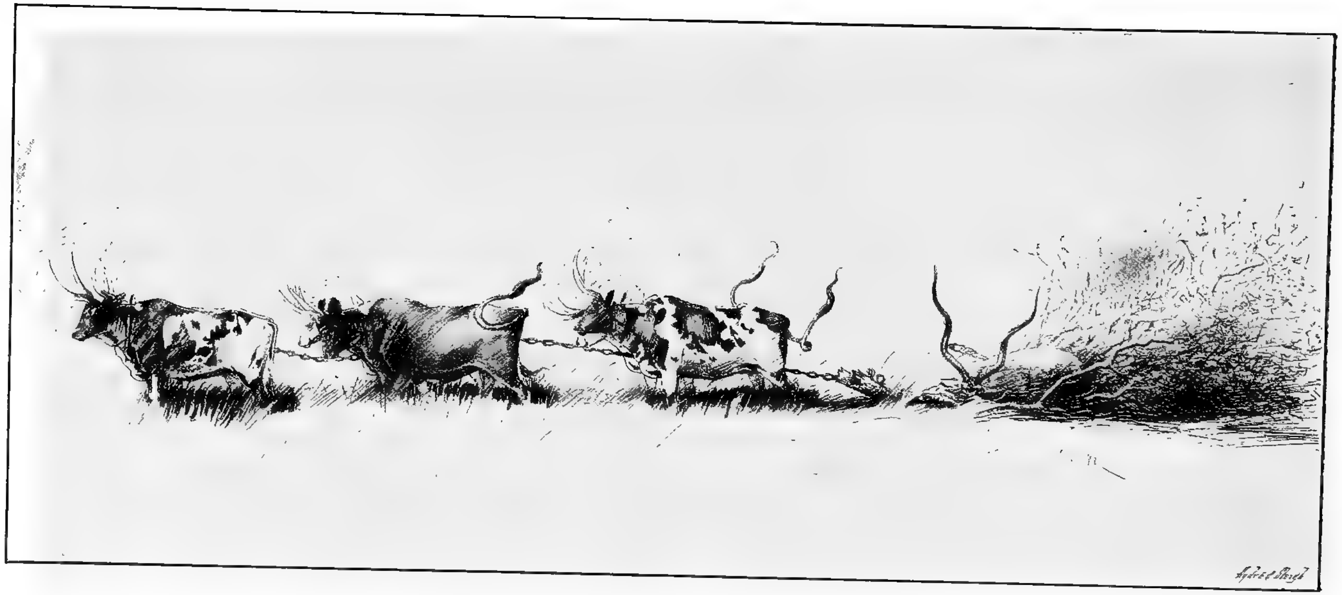
During my hunt (sometimes alone and sometimes with Hert) I was in great hope of seeing roan antelope, some fresh spoor of which we saw daily; but what game there was had been evidently much disturbed, and had moved far from the water after drinking. For five days I saw nothing, till, returning one evening from the Gong Hills, we came across a solitary koodoo cow; and as we wanted the meat for the old lady, we gave chase at once. Though I had a good chance, and Hert a better one, we fairly muddled it, and the buck got clear away untouched after about ten minutes' chase. Soon afterwards we turned our horses' heads for home; and there, in some open glades within thirty yards of us, stood Mr. and Mrs. Pig and the entire Pig family, so I got off quietly and had a nice easy shot at the old warrior. A loud squeal told at once that he had received my message, upon which he started off after the rest with a broken shoulder, but only went a short distance, for Hert took up his spoor very nicely, while I flattered myself I was doing rather well in the trail of what proved to be the quite scatheless old sow. A whistle from Hert, however, brought me quickly to him, and there lay old Ugly *in extremis*, with his back up against a bush and his fiendishly hideous head and fine tusks directed towards us—dying as he had lived, hard. Notwithstanding his excessive ugliness the wart-hog looks what he is, a toughened old soldier seasoned by many a battle, and arouses in the heart of the hunter a sense of respect for the indomitable pluck which characterises all the members of his family throughout the world. For sheer dogged obstinacy and fierce expression, he has probably no equal; and though in my small experience of the animals I never saw any of those hostile demonstrations that one reads of in books, I can imagine that, if suddenly encountered after a slight wound, he might prove a very dangerous beast.

The last few days at Gong were not particularly pleasant. Every day some one would come with the usual startling Matabele news, and I was afraid our boys might leave us—a misfortune only too common when one has to trust to natives. Happily for us, we were particularly lucky in our followers, or all our plans might have been upset. I thought it well, however, to hurry on Oom in the construction of the rough little waggon which he was making of old wheels and poles of wood for our journey into the "fly"; and as to the boys, we filled their bellies with good meat as the surest way to their hearts, and continued to hope for the best.



OOM ROELEF'S OUTSPAN AT GONG

I was particularly fond of "Office," my Shangan boy, whose good-nature and unvarying cheerfulness was a treat even under the most depressing circumstances. One night, through Teenie, who speaks Zulu perfectly, I had a long talk with him about his superstitions, beliefs, and past life. His ideas about Englishmen were interesting. They come, he said, from the bottom of the sea ten days to the eastward of Delagoa Bay. There they live entirely under



USUAL METHOD OF DRAWING GAME TO CAMP

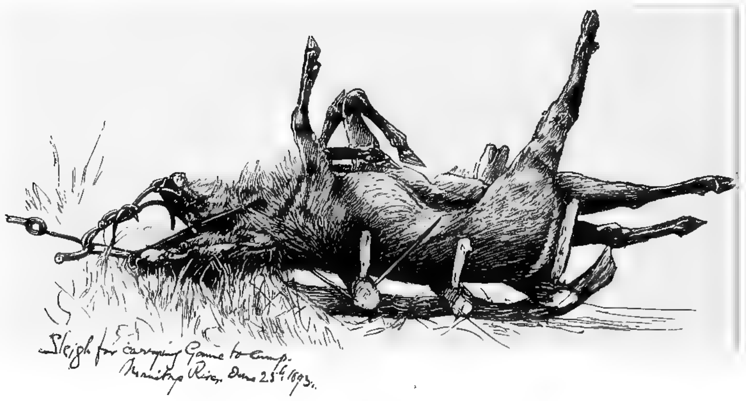
water, with the salt waves splashing over them! I did not know this before, and may perhaps be excused if I continue to doubt the fact, even though backed by the authority of the natives up the Congo on the west coast of Africa, who entertain pretty nearly the same ideas as to the home and habits of the British race. The belief may possibly have originated with cannibal races of days gone by; for, apart from the superstitious dread with which the natives regard the white man, few of them care to kill him for food, his flesh being, it is said, so impregnated with salt as to be almost uneatable. Cannibals much prefer their own kind, as related in Romilly's *Pacific*, and that most interesting of all books on native life, *In Savage Africa*, by Captain Winwood Reade.

The Shangans believe that they themselves originated from a common mother, who sprang from the reeds by some river, and that death is the end of all things; there is nothing whatever beyond the grave. Office thinks, moreover, that the English come to Africa to get "biltung" and then go home and buy wives; while Pompoom affirms that they come over to keep dry, as in England it is always raining. They are certainly "dry" enough, in one sense of the word, when they get there. In fact, I never saw so many thirsty Englishmen in all my life as in Johannesburg, where every second man who "has a few minutes to spare" seems to be afflicted with the hand-to-mouth disease.

Two hyænas come every evening to make night hideous, sleep fitful, and dogs excited. Teenie tried to poison them with strychnine, but I am inclined to think that the drug agrees with them, for they have already disposed of four doctored pieces of meat, without any apparent result. No one can imagine the profound and weird melancholy of the spotted hyæna's howl. Tom Hood might have added to his inimitable verses of the "Haunted House" order, had he ever heard the sound on a dark African night; and no picture of the brute when emitting it—not even the powerful black-and-white light effects of a Gustave Doré—could convey to the reader the "Hark to the Tomb" effect on eye and brain that the sound of their voices creates.

The last night of our stay at Gong I went to bed early and tired, after five hard days in pursuit of roan antelopes, without any result. About ten o'clock one of the hyænas returned and began one of his awful howls within (I should guess) forty yards of the waggon. He had taken the poisoned bait, and never in my life have I heard anything more human and heart-rending than the cries he emitted some two or three minutes afterwards. Personally I did not much care for this barbarous method of killing animals; but really dangerous and offensive brutes like lions, leopards, and hyænas have, I suppose, to be got rid of anyhow as civilisation advances. In about five minutes the groans and screams got fainter and fainter, and we concluded that we should find the hyæna dead next morning by the water. But not a bit of it! Nature had for the third time come to his assistance: he got rid of his poison without drinking a drop of water, and for anything I know, he is still alive.

The following morning, after many farewells and good wishes from Oom Roelef's family, we left Gong for the east; and glad I was to get away. At parting the old lady embraced me warmly, and went so far as to call me her "dear Jan," from which it will be gathered that we had been getting on rather well of late. I could not help smiling at the earnest way in which she confided her "man" to my care, as if I had to look after him instead of his seeing that I did not get lost—really the chief danger in South Africa. I liked the old body very much, as she was always honest and kind to me, and it was only when things went a bit wrong that she lapsed into the temporary indulgence of Dutch Billingsgate. Oom, I could see, was rather uneasy at leaving them this time unprotected, as they would be for a few days till Petrus and Hert returned, the more so as amongst the natives the rumours about the Matabele were taking a somewhat serious tone; but Frau Van Staden showed herself as plucky as other Dutch women who on thousands of occasions have bravely followed the fortunes of their husbands through the troublous times of the past one hundred years in South Africa. Fearful stories one hears round Dutch camp fires of the sufferings these brave women had to undergo, of which the big Lake Ngami trek is a good instance. One cannot quite agree with the contemptuous aspersions that are cast by many on Dutch character and Dutch courage; for amongst these people, particularly the women, there has always been that indomitable spirit of self-reliance which, whatever their other failings may be, calls for the admiration of the world.

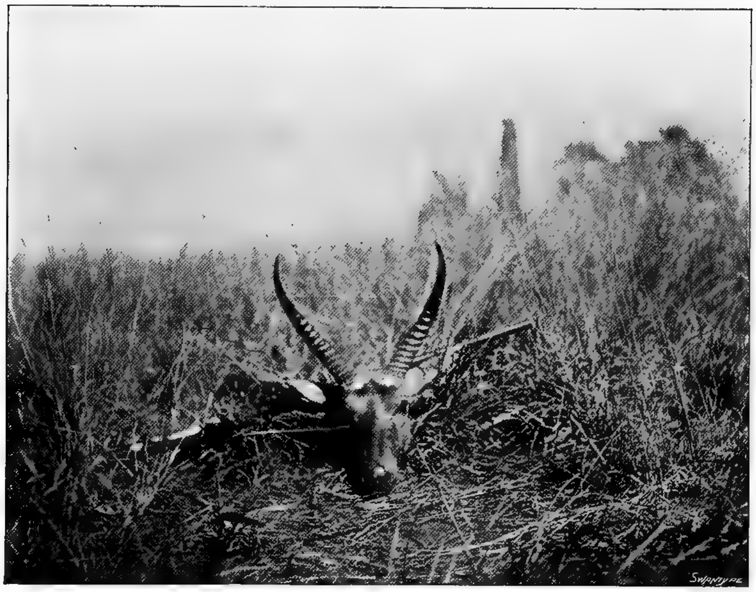


Sleigh for carrying Game to Camp.
Manitza River, Dec 25th 1893.

GAME SLEDGE FOR STANDING CAMP

CHAPTER VI

MONDAY, 12th June, saw us once more on the move, travelling north-eastward along a hunters' trail, towards the Bubye River. The following day we reached Michelfontein, a lovely spot standing amongst big trees, and adorned with what I had never expected to see—a real "Afric's sunny fountain," with no humbug about it. Water clear and crystal as a Highland stream, and



HEAD OF AN ADULT REEDBUCK, SHOWING SOFT HORN BASES[1] swarms of beautiful yellow fish breaking its glassy surface. A day's halt, and we hunted onwards towards the Bubye, passing through alternate forest and waterless park-like country. There was a great quantity of apparently fresh roan antelope spoor, so we momentarily expected to encounter a troop of these animals, but were again disappointed ; other hunters were before us, and the tracks were a week old. On approaching the Bubye, we found the country more open, and when within three miles of the river the old hunter and myself, with Piet and Tace on the farther side, entered and worked the great dry sluit which runs at right angles to it. Here we expected to find reedbuck or waterbuck, both of which my companion said had been numerous the previous year.

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[1] I give the above photo to support the illustration on page 169, wherein I wish to introduce to my naturalist readers a very remarkable fact with regard to adult reedbuck rams. All ruminating animals have curious pouches of musky secretions situated in various parts of the body, and the use of these to the animal does not yet seem to be known. Most of them have only the tear duct or suborbital sinus full of an oily mucus which at certain seasons becomes highly inflamed and discharges. In the deer, klipspringer, and Indian blackbuck this is developed to an extraordinary extent; whilst the gnus, hartebeests, and gazelles have in addition little pockets in front of and just above the hoofs, in which is also secreted an oil gland. Mr. Baillie Grohmann informs me that both the chamois and the White Rocky Mountain goat have a pouch con-

After working down the middle of the great watercourse, we formed line, and beat the country before us with considerable success. After a time up sprang an old reedbuck ram, his wife, and a young ram, and by careful manœuvring I got an easy shot at the big ram, but made an inexcusable miss. Shortly afterwards Oom had an equally good chance, but his cartridge missed fire, though a minute later Tace and Piet killed an old ewe, and we left them behind to pack the beast on one of the ponies and bring it to camp. Nearly an hour elapsed before we saw anything more, and I was thinking of leaving the sluit, as, owing to invisible holes under the long grass, I had to scramble along under difficulties, and could hardly keep my small pony on his legs, when suddenly I saw Oom signalling to me to come to his side of the watercourse. I accordingly got off the pony, and dragged him over one of the great mud-holes which intersected the ground in every direction, when a fine reedbuck sprang up within a few yards of me, and going slowly over a big dip, stood nicely at about fifty yards, offering me an easy shot, which I fortunately turned to good account. Oom arrived and helped me to put the buck on my pony, and we reached the road half an hour later, just in time to see a most entertaining chase. Flying down from the bush came a herd of waterbuck—six ewes, and an old ram—going, as they generally do, in a long string with intervals, their heads carried well up and the old ram a good lumbering last. Immediately in their wake were the two Basadanotes, who had again found us, and Hert. All three were well mounted, and were rapidly gaining on the

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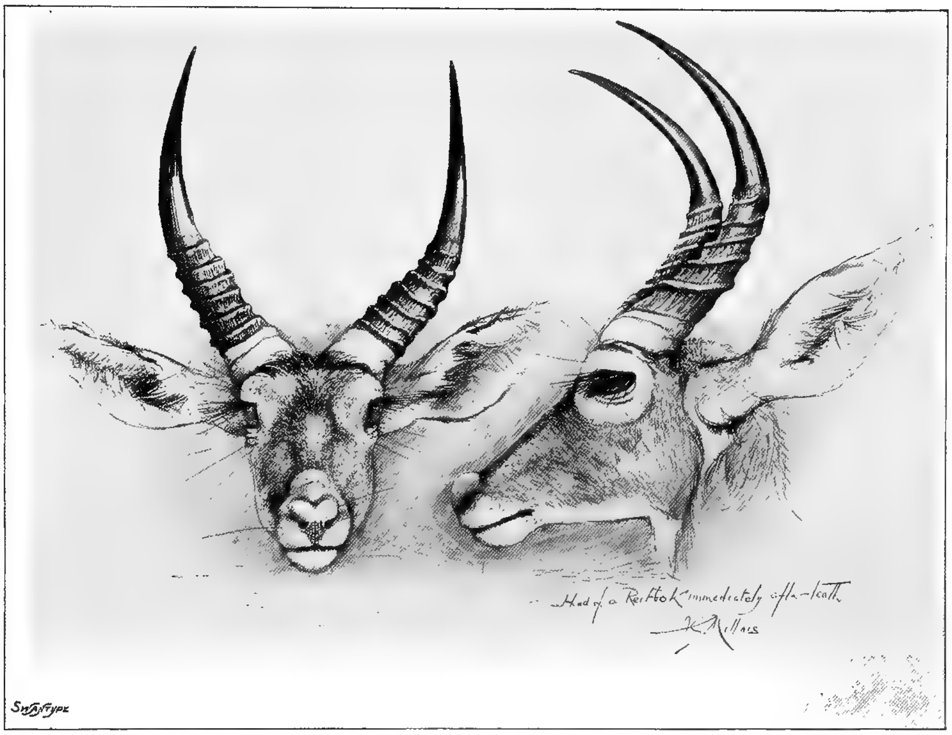
taining the same strong-scented secretions situated immediately behind the horns on the top of the skulls. I think, therefore, that the reedbuck ram, which has no suborbital sinus, has the oil glands situated actually in the base of the horns themselves, and that by this inflammation and consequent action at certain periods (July, August, and September) the whole of the lower parts of the horns becomes soft and pink, exactly like the head of an immature animal in a state of growth.

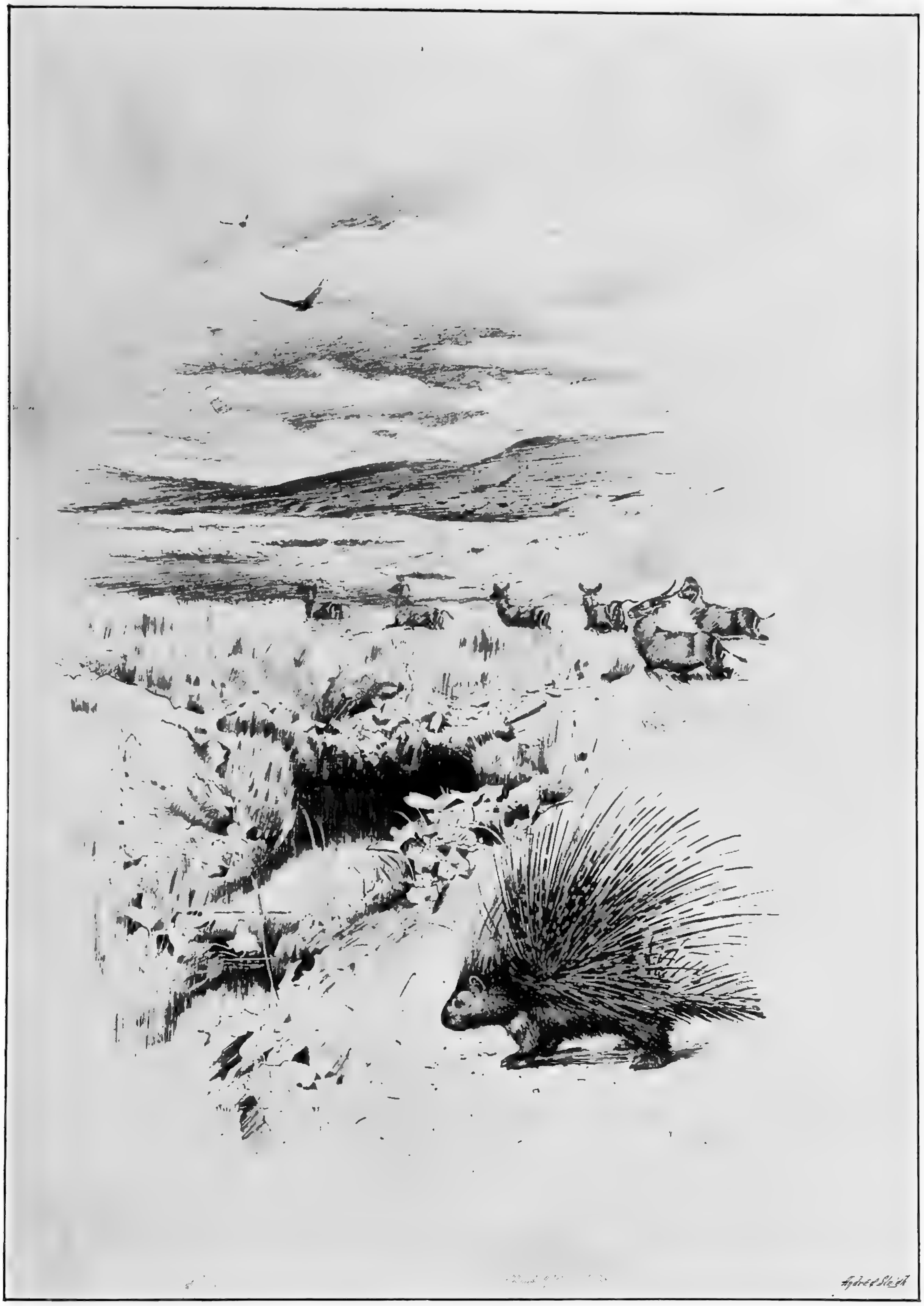
buck. Two ewes of the troop they had already killed, and it looked as though these Dutchmen were about to bag the rest of them for their beloved "biltung"; but fortune favoured the waterbucks. Rough ground riddled with holes was all right for them—they were used to it—and when they reached the edge of the sluit, away they went as easily as if they were on a turnpike road, whilst the horses in pursuit were all at sea and compelled to move warily for fear of broken legs. The Basadanotes followed the troop a short distance, but Hert, who was a poor rider at best, greeted his mother earth with more force than tenderness, and proceeded to vent his displeasure on his poor horse (an excellent and willing animal, who was not to blame) by a series of kicks in the stomach and many Dutch oaths. For my part, I was not at all sorry that the waterbucks got away, for it is the slaughter of the ewes of all species that plays havoc with the game of the country. There are always plenty of wandering males in search of troops of females with or without an owner, and the destruction of a limited number of these makes little difference; but when the females suffer constant persecution, the days of all big game are numbered.


Head of a Reitbok immediately after death
J. G. Millais

HEAD OF A REEDBUCK IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH

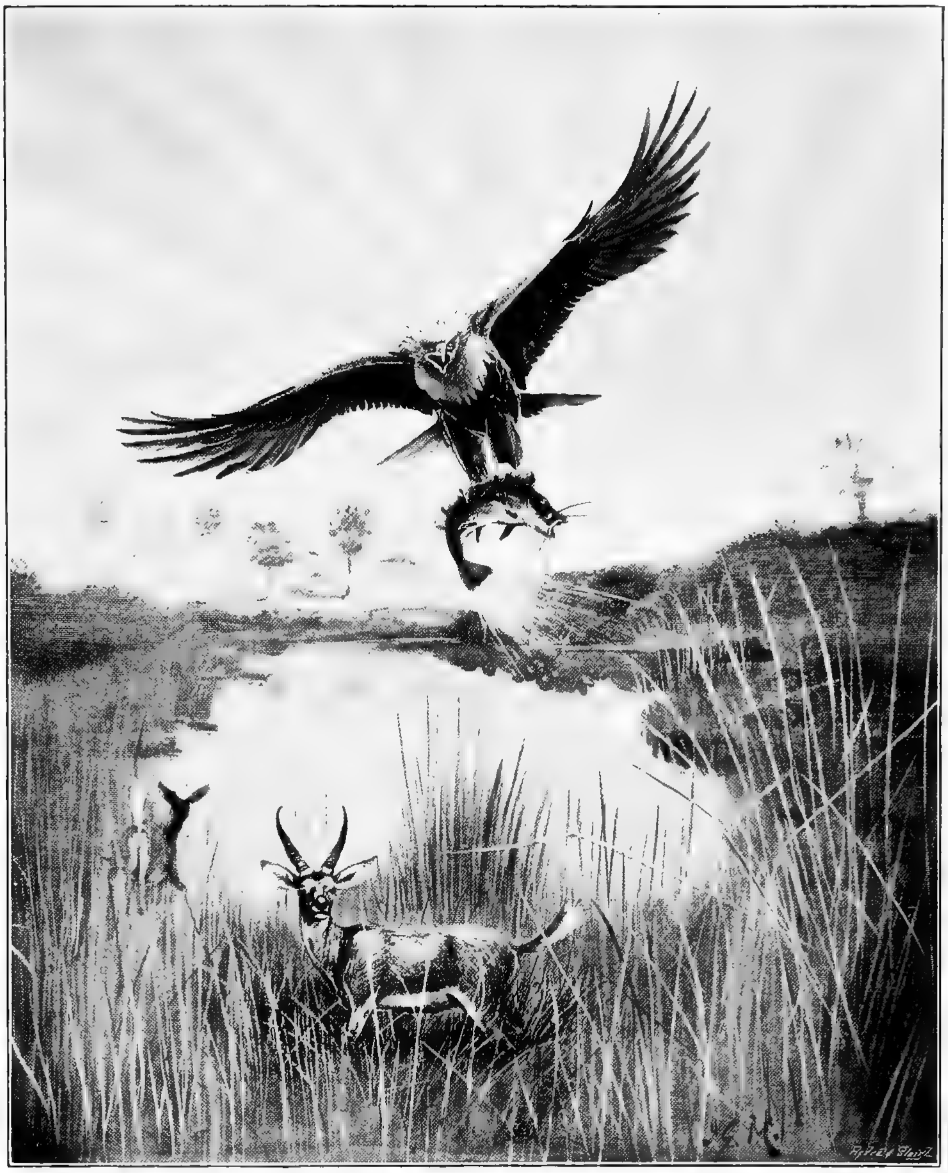
Showing curious shape of the nose and soft flesh-coloured bases to the horns.

And here I should like to say a few words about African hunting as it impressed me. To enjoy it a man must have a good firm seat on a horse, good nerve, and at least some knowledge of natural history. These three qualifications are absolutely essential to anyone who means to kill game himself. Without them he can do nothing, but with them and with unlimited patience he will sooner or later stand over any beast he longs to possess. He need only be a very ordinary rifle shot to commence with, for months of hard exercise and plain living will work wonders with his shooting ; and, with good luck, he may at any rate obtain specimens of all the larger game in a year's hunting. Being a fine rifle shot is not, therefore, a *sine quâ non,* as it is in some other parts of the world ; a man who is a fine and fearless rider, has quick perception and good eyesight, and is a moderate shot, will do twice as well in Africa as a first-class rifle shot who is lacking in the other qualities. All the most successful African hunters have been generally very ordinary shots, though well qualified in other respects and very strong, as a man must be to stand the wear and tear of veldt life. The life may be roughly described as follows : You rise on the first paling of the sun in the eastern horizon, when the cocks are trying to crow beneath the waggon ; tell your black boy to make up his fire and put the kettle on to boil. There is no need to bother yourself as to " whether it's dry, or whether it's hot ; as you've got to weather it, whether or not." Blessed Africa ! it is always going to be a fine day there—sometimes too fine. You dress yourself quickly, see that your horse has his morning feed of mealies or Kaffir corn, and swallow your own breakfast of tea and buck with a gusto such as only a hunter when the breath of the veldt is upon him knows anything of. Another ten minutes, and you and your companion have lighted your pipes, seen to your rifle and cartridges, skinning-knife, etc., and are in the saddle and heading for the nearest bush. If you are in a " Thirst " country, you take, of course, a water-bottle, and never go out without matches, as you never know when you will get back. Suppose, now, that you have viewed a troop of buck ; they will generally move a few steps forward on seeing you, and then you and your companion will have time to see if the old ram's head is any good. If it is, dismount quickly and take as steady a shot at him as you can—he is generally standing broadside on to you from fifty to a hundred yards off—and then, unless the animal is so hard hit that you can readily get up to him on foot, jump on to your horse as soon as possible, canter quickly after him, and try to find out the effect of your shot. By remounting at once you can see directly the line of the animal's retreat, and, whether he be slightly wounded



WATERBUCK ON THE MOVE

or missed, you will often by judicious management get a second shot nearly but not quite as good as the first. All these big African antelope are slow to take serious alarm, so several good chances are sometimes obtained at one or more



REEDBUCKS AND SCREAMING EAGLE

where they have not been repeatedly harassed. If, however, the bucks show no inclination to stand again after your first shot, keep them well within sight, following about a hundred yards in the rear, and ready to jump off at any moment when they seem disposed to halt. Hard riding, in the hope of running down the animal, is advisable only when the country is open, your horse is fresh, and the head of the coveted buck good enough to risk a bad fall, laceration by thorns, and the chance of losing yourself in the veldt. According to my humble experience I should say the roan antelope can be fairly run to a standstill in four miles, an old koodoo bull in two, and a waterbuck in three—I mean by a man on an ordinary mount not specially gifted with speed and endurance—while it would require something quite out of the ordinary in the way of horseflesh to run down a sable bull in fair chase. The latter, like the wildebeests, is not only by far the most tenacious of life of all the antelopes, but has such splendid bottom that I should think it is seldom run down by the hunter.

Now it often happens that, owing to the denseness of the thorns, even the best hunter can only follow his game in the forest for a very short distance. In such cases it is better to retrace your steps to the spot where your shot has been taken, and examine the ground carefully where the animal has been standing, and the line of his ultimate retreat. And here comes in the noble art of spooring, a science in which the hunter can never hope to obtain any degree of excellence under three or four years. The amateur sportsman will therefore do well to leave that to his white or black companion, whose practical knowledge of the work should be made sure of before you engage him, since that is the principal part he has to play. Fenimore Cooper, in his blood-curdling tales of Indian life in days gone by, would lead us to believe that "the noble red man" could follow the trail of a wounded beast as no white man could ever hope to do; but from what I heard and saw in the Rockies, I should say this is only one of the many pretty fictions with which novelists are wont to adorn these evil-smelling and treacherous people. To-day the white and half-breed hunters certainly equal and in many cases surpass the Redskins in the knowledge of woodcraft, though the white man cannot, I think, ever equal on his own ground the eyesight and powers of observation of the black. Possibly, in these points, the very best white hunter might fall little short of a native accustomed to hunting; but for veldt knowledge, seeing the game, creeping up to it for his shot, and spooring after it is wounded, the native as a born child of the wilderness must ever be superior. As an instance of this, take what was told me by an Englishman and a Dutchman with whom I trekked down country, and who lived at N'gogo in Natal. Some years ago they had stood one winter in the thick bush country to the north of Zululand by St. Lucia Bay. One day a Zulu came to them and said that if they would give him ten cartridges he would supply them with game during their stay—for they were not on a hunting expedition. That he might possibly do this with advantage to himself seemed likely enough, but before accepting his offer they determined to see whether the man could shoot with his old Martini or not; so, putting up a good-sized mark at fifty yards, they made him take several shots at it. The results were far from satisfactory. All the bullets flew wide of the mark; so the hunter was voted a fraud who wished to obtain ammunition under false pretences, and was accordingly told to "vamoose." The Zulu, however, protested, and promised to shoot them an inyala if some cartridges were given him. So at last the Englishman, who wanted a head of one of these antelopes, gave him three cartridges, believing, all the same, that he would never see the Zulu again. About a week after the departure of the black man there was a commotion round the camp fire one evening, and in marched the Zulu, with two other natives, carrying the hides and quarters of two fine inyalas which he said he had shot the evening before in the dense bush some miles away. To make a long story short, the hunter was then given ten more cartridges, and during the stay of my friends he brought in nine beasts, including an old buffalo bull. They were much pleased and still more astonished, not only at the man's honesty, but at his success as a hunter. His explanation, however, was simple enough: he never fired at a beast at a distance of over ten or twelve yards, and accordingly made sure of his shot every time. I believe this story to be absolutely true, for the Shangan hunters whom I saw afterwards told me the same thing; they, with their miserable percussion guns, never dreamed of firing at a big animal at over twenty yards. The white man, however learned and experienced, could never hope to attain this success in approaching wild creatures, for all the animals, as a rule, see him before he sees them, so he has to content himself with what he can get at a more respectful distance. It is just possible that the game, accustomed to see natives moving about, may not treat them with the serious consideration and fear with which they notice the white intruder. Moreover, a good black hunter can see the whisk of an antelope's ear where you, or even a professional white hunter, can hardly detect his whole body even when pointed out. Their quickness in observing signs, too, when a beast has passed, wounded or otherwise, is simply marvellous, forming one of the strongest points of interest amidst the many delights of the chase.

Oom Roelef, my dear old hunter, was, I fancy, about as good in the art of spooring and veldt knowledge as any white man ever can be after a life spent in the wilds of South Africa, and I often used to admire his fine sense of reasoning and observation. Patience and deliberation are the most essential requisites for following a wild beast, dangerous or otherwise, and at this the old man was really first-class. Though slow at times, he seldom made a mistake ; and some of the most delightful recollections I have now of my companion are connected with our wandering along, with senses highly strung and keenly alert, on the trail of some denizen of the forest that had for the time escaped us.

Another most essential feature is being able to see the game quickly. Even a big beast like a koodoo bull is sometimes overlooked when the hunter is brought to a standstill by the stems of a wait-a-bit. Everything in Africa is, as a rule, flooded in such a blaze of sunlight that the sight must become accustomed to the peculiar effects of light and shade before one can distinguish at a distance not only form but tones of colour. The Almighty has blessed me with extraordinarily good and quick sight,—I say it not with pride, but with thankfulness,—and as I have hunted birds and beasts since my childhood, I very soon got accustomed to picking up animals when standing in the bush or open, so I had not this, one of the chief difficulties of the hunter, to contend with. After a bit it became a sort of joke with myself and the Dutchmen, for I easily surpassed them in this respect, though they had been at it all their lives. "Jan sees all the game first," they would say, "and then loses it," meaning of course that I could not spoor, supposing the animal to have been wounded.

What is in most cases a far less agreeable task—indeed real hard work—is making careful drawings of animals after you have shot them. You come into camp, say about eleven o'clock, have some breakfast, and then smoke your pipe. The great heat of the day has now commenced, and as this was the only time I could devote to artistic work, having to keep my journal at night, I found it most disagreeable, especially the close anatomical drawing of muscles, etc., when the skin is removed, and small details and peculiarities of the various birds and animals, without a knowledge of which no artist can hope to make even a moderate picture afterwards. The great heat of the sun at mid-day renders the white man particularly lethargic ; a feeling of intense *dolce far niente* steals over one, rendering all exertion distasteful ; and but for the pleasure they give to others as well as oneself in after years when the wild life has come to an end, no one could ever bring himself to paint them on the spot. At home I always enjoy my drawing, except that it never satisfies me, and one occasionally feels disposed to get up and dance all over such feeble presentments of Nature; but drawing in the open air in Africa is a very different thing! Your work there seems far more laborious, and no idea of fudging must be entertained if the stuff is to be of any good. You have not even the consolation of the camera fiend, who shuts up his plate or rolls of film in a dark box and trusts to Providence that the light won't get in till he gives them to the Stereoscopic Company to print for him. Then, too, there is the constant inspection of visitors, Dutch and black, who press round you as full of information, and as ready to impart it, as that old New Zealand chief whose friends, in reply to an inquiry after him, explained his absence by saying that he gave them so much good advice that they were obliged to put him out of the way. Of either art or nature the Dutchman knows nothing, but he does wash himself now and then; whilst the blacks make intelligent observations but smell badly. So you see, your choice of companions depends to some extent upon the sensitiveness of your nasal organ. The ignorance of the Dutchman is both proverbial and astounding. I give the following as a common example of Dutch criticism.

Scene: The waggon. Enter Oom Roelef, his two fat sons, and two strange Dutchmen going down country. Introduction, followed by raising of hat with left hand, shaking hands with right. Interchange of tobaccos and prolonged stares. After which the following conversation (literal translation):—

Oom Roelef: "Will Jan be pleased that he shall show to my friends the prints that he has made of the game and myself?"

Jan replies in bad Dutch that he will be delighted. Sketch produced—Oom Roelef's head.

Ques. "Well, I'm damned! Who is the man?"

Ans. "It's Oom Roelef's head."

Ques. "Oom Roelef's head? Where's his rifle?"

Ans. "Oh, it is not in the picture."

Ques. "Why have you not made the waggon and the oxen too?"

Ans. "There was not space for that."

Ques. "How do you make that? do you make it with the hand?"

Ans. "Yes" (he would have been equally satisfied if I had said I had done it with my foot). Some minutes afterwards I heard one saying to the other that I was a big liar, as I could not possibly do these things without a machine of some sort.

Next sketch: Study of some lions attacking a buffalo bull, and trying to disable it by hamstringing. I thought this a rather interesting picture, and was at considerable trouble to present the situation exactly as described by Van Staden, who had been a close observer of this stirring incident.

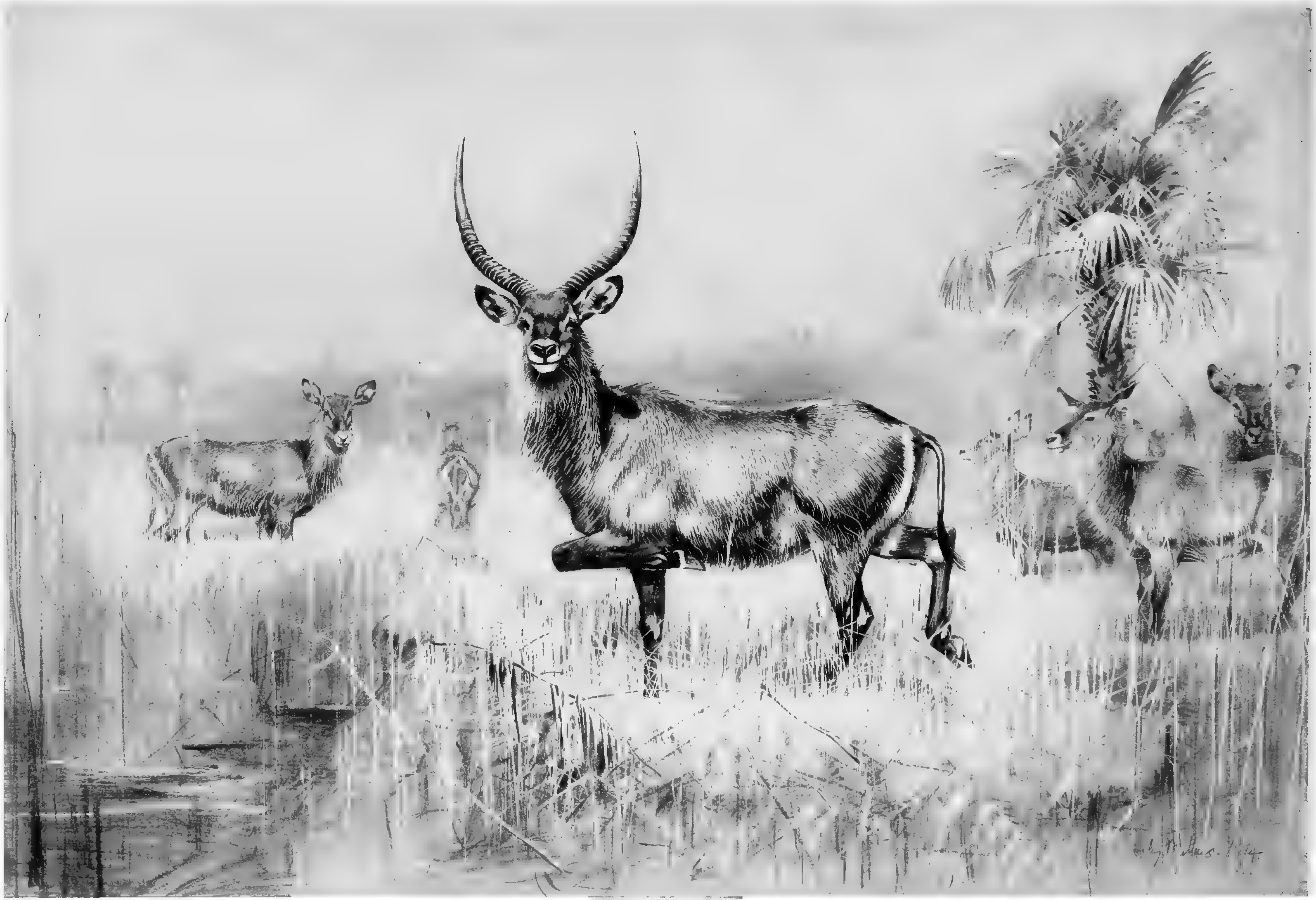
Ques. "What is this?"

One of Van Staden's sons, immediately volunteering imformation—

Ans. "That? That is some Boer dogs hauling a cow to be inspanned."

"Yes, oh yes."

The natives, however, are far more intelligent than this. A Shangan hunter, Clas, whom I afterwards had with me for a month, on my showing him this same sketch one day, was delighted with it. He grunted and ho-hoed considerably, grasping the situation at once, and naming the animals and trees correctly. In fact, he never gave a wrong name to anything I showed him. "Gentleman," the Shangan boy, was very quiet, and hardly ever laughed or talked like the other boy, "Office," but towards the end of our trip he blossomed out considerably, and above all things seemed to take an interest in my drawings. I used to sit and sketch up on the kartel of the waggon, where the breeze was nice and cool. If Gentleman was about, few minutes would elapse before his black poll would appear about the horizon of the karosses, and standing on the steel brake at the back of the waggon, he would watch me as long as I cared to let him. When taken no notice of, he would begin to talk good-naturedly in a mixture of half Zulu and half Dutch, and always gave the right names of things as they grew on the paper beneath my hand. Sometimes, out of fun, he would give wrong names to see if I would notice it and understand. If I observed the mistake and understood the wrong word he had made use of, it tickled him immensely, and he would chuckle with delight. And here let me say that though the painting of wild animals at large in their own haunts is one of the most interesting pursuits, it is at the same time one of the most difficult tasks to which an artist can set himself, if he would do justice to his subject as well as his craft. I do not say this because I have entered this field myself, but because of the ridiculous criticism one too often hears, or reads in the papers, on illustrations of birds and animals. An artist may be a first-class performer as a draughtsman, composer, and master of light and shade, and yet draw down upon himself the laughter of the experienced sportsman and naturalist when he attempts to show what birds and beasts are like in their wild state. And the reason is plain enough: he is neither a sportsman nor a naturalist—very few artists are—and has therefore to rely entirely on his skill in making a nice picture at the expense of truth. Seldom, indeed, has an artist working for his living either means



Swan Electric Engraving Co.

Waterbuck getting the Wind

or opportunity for becoming a hunter too, and searching for and studying the wild creatures in their own homes, even if his inclination runs that way; and hence a certain form of illustration has grown up in our books the interest of which is in inverse proportion to its theatrical and sensational character. We have got a bit sick now of these conventional lions, buffaloes, and elephants in a chronic state of charge. One or two pictures of these animals charging, if well done, are always pleasant to the eye, but a whole series of this same thing, such as we have now in nearly every book on Africa—even when fairly well done (and few of them are that)—is as nauseating as the bulk of political speeches in these days of working-man worship.

Only one man towers above the heads of all other artists of wild beasts and birds of this or any other time—Joseph Wolf—and he, strange to say, has never seen any big creatures roaming about, except German wild boars and stags. Yet, broadly speaking, he is the greatest master of animal life (not even excepting Landseer) that ever lived; and though some few naturalists and sportsmen—happily a daily increasing body—have had full knowledge and appreciation of this truly great man's work for the past fifty years, it is astonishing how little known his work is. It may perhaps seem presumptuous on my part to criticise the works of Landseer as compared with those of Wolf; but as a little boy I believe I once sat on Landseer's knee, and, armed with pencil and paper, devoted half an hour of my valuable time to teaching him how to draw deer! It will be seen, therefore, that "modesty of nature" is not altogether a strong feature of my composition; but, joking apart, I think I have at least as much right to criticise the works of these two artists as some of the art reviewers in the daily papers, who hardly know a duck from an owl, or a deer from an antelope. I have at least been trying to the best of my ability to master some portion of this field of art for the last ten years, and at any rate I know how hard the task is, how easy it is to make mistakes, and how extremely difficult it is to produce good work.

Sir Edwin Landseer was one of the ablest delineators of sympathy and sentiment that ever lived, while his composition and drawing—it seems a platitude to say so—were as perfect as anything the world has ever seen. His dogs and deer and domestic animals are in nearly every case perfection, but even without them his landscapes would live on their own merits alone. Against this, however, must be set off the fact that Landseer often failed as a colourist; and when he plunged into natural history, which he knew but little about, he made most absurd mistakes. In point of sentiment and execution nothing finer has ever been done than the "Shepherd's Chief Mourner," while, from the naturalist's point of view, no greater rubbish was ever turned out than the "Eagles attacking a Swannery." And yet—it does not matter who you are—when you gaze on this picture you are entranced with it. The subject, execution, feeling, and composition are alike superb, but it is simply the most ridiculous nonsense as representing a truthful scene from nature, and in addition to this the eagles are dreadfully out of drawing. The eagles represented are the white-tailed species, till recently common on the coasts of Scotland. In habits this eagle is almost vulturine, and being of a cowardly nature and subsisting chiefly on fish, it rarely musters sufficient courage to attack a farmyard and carry off an old hen. When it does—as has often been seen—it will drop its prey like a hot coal on the slightest appearance of a cock coming to the rescue. Its claws, indeed, are not of sufficient power to strike and kill a bird of any size, and living as it does to a large extent on offal, it would just as soon think of striking a Piccadilly omnibus as a full-grown swan. Landseer had evidently been listening to some stories of peregrine falcons cutting down birds in mid-air, and thought it was a splendid subject when he put in the eagle in the background breaking a swan's neck by a single blow as it goes whizzing through space.

Without detracting for one moment from the merits of so great a genius, I think he must have got a bit hipped with public criticism sometimes, and knowing the taste of the British public for the sensational at the expense of the truthful, he produced such a picture as "The Monarch of the Glen." This is really the ideal stag—not the real one—and Landseer did not think much of it himself. By a cunning subduing of the landscape, he intensified the attraction of the central figure. I think I might even say it was a beautiful pot-boiler, for I know several little stories in connection with that picture. Though probably Landseer's best known and most popular picture, it is but a poor production by comparison with the stag in "Browsing"—the most perfect Highland stag ever painted.

To be a great animal painter the artist must have a thorough knowledge of the anatomy as well as the habits of birds and beasts, and this knowledge means long practice and wide experience. The average man who can paint a duck beautifully goes all to pieces over a hawk or a gull, and so on, simply because he has not given, as he ought to have done, months of separate study to each and every species throughout the animal kingdom. To those then who know what a bird and a beast should be, how great is the genius of a man like Wolf, who has attempted all, and what is more, succeeded in all. *Nil tetigit quod non ornavit.* The British public cannot be said to know Wolf. They do not understand his work, and have seen but little of it; for he has rarely exhibited of late years, and being a modest and charming old gentleman, he is above the throng of mediocrities who are ever pushing and advertising themselves, and require an art critic to discover them once in six months. He still leads his quiet life in the studio by the Zoo, where I had the pleasure of seeing him lately, and though of advanced age, his hand and eye have lost none of their cunning. When Wolf has gone[1] there will be no one to take his place in animals, though in birds we now have Mr. Thorburn. This great painter of animal life will probably be well and widely known as soon as he has passed away, and only the touch of his master-hand remains in the homes of those who could appreciate him in his lifetime.

How great was the admiration of Landseer himself for Wolf was told me in the following little story by the late Lord Tweedmouth, in whose house the two great artists were both staying and working. I must first, however, inform the reader that Landseer was a firm believer in the pre-existence of man in other forms. One day Wolf was busy finishing one of the superb panels which grace the walls of Guisachan (Lord Tweedmouth's lovely seat in Ross-shire), when Landseer and his host returned from stalking, and coming up behind Wolf, who was working, stood gazing at his picture for some time without making any remark. At last Wolf got a bit nervous and fidgeted about. Then turning round to Landseer, on whom he was afraid the picture had created an unfavourable impression :—

"Well, Landseer," he said, "you might say something: I'm afraid you don't like it."

"Well, not exactly that," was the dry reply, "for I was just thinking that before you were a man, Wolf, you must have been an osprey" (the bird at which the artist was working).

Now I have wandered a long way from my subject; for from the sun-parched wilderness of Africa to art criticism is a big trek; but I hope the reader will forgive me. It is only my admiration for Wolf, and my wish to pay even a small tribute to the genius of the man—a genius which I consider has been grossly neglected—that have led me so far astray.

By the Bubye we began to see more signs of game than previously. There was a sprinkling of quite fresh spoor of buffalo, lions, sable antelope, waterbuck, and pallah; but during the four days of our stay I was particularly unlucky: I never let my rifle off, except at a duiker, which I missed. All the others, however, got something; and Piet Landsberg, the first day he was out, fired at a leopard, three koodoo bulls, and a waterbuck, but without success, though unfortunately wounding badly two of the koodoos. Like myself, he was only a beginner at spooring, and not only lost his game but very nearly himself. One day the old man and I were returning after a long day's hunt, having only seen a few pallah, when we came across a remarkable tree close to the road by the river. On its trunk was written a little history, which told in so many words some interesting details as clearly as if they had been printed there.

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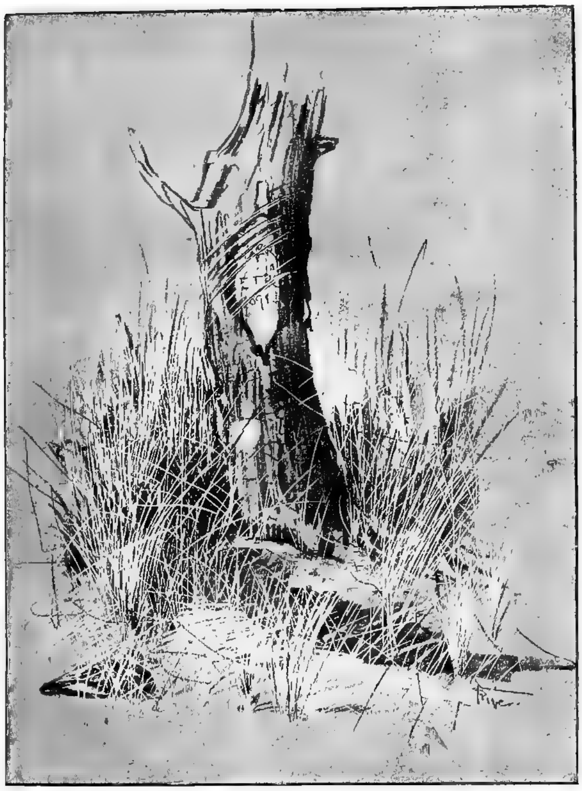
[1] Joseph Wolf died July 1899.



NATURE'S PROTEST

The above tree is sketched direct from nature as it stands to-day by the Bubye River, and the marks on its trunk tell their own story as plainly as if they had been printed underneath. Some time in 1891 two enterprising Englishmen had reached this spot on the Bubye, and in common with a good many vulgar people, they evidently considered it necessary to carve their names on a tree, that all after-comers might see them. At this part of the Bubye some time very shortly before my arrival there had apparently been much game, which had induced the usual pair or so of lions to follow in their wake and frequent their paths to the water. There was consequently much spoor of these lions (in this case an old lion and lioness) up and down the game track by which the tree stands, and in one of their peregrinations the lion (or, perhaps, the lioness) had stopped at this identical tree, and there had stood up on his hind legs, and gone through the usual process of sharpening his claws on the bark. Nature could not possibly have devised a neater or more apt rebuke to the vulgarity of man than this.

We had been at the "Blauw Ghat" (blue water-hole) at the Bubye two days, when one morning Oom Roelef's brother-in-law, Cornellis Basadanote, turned up. He was a splendid specimen of a man, and had been a hunter all his days, his present business being a combination of hunter and wild-animal catcher. He had come down the river to beg some medicine for his son, who, he said, was dying of fever. It was difficult to prescribe for a man at a distance when you did not know what condition he was in, so I decided to accompany him and see his camp as well. A ride of two hours brought us to a lovely spot amidst great trees overhanging a silvery stream. Here, on a level plateau, with blue wreaths of smoke curling upward through the great branches, stood the old hunter's camp. It was about as picturesque a scene as one could well witness. Two great waggons were joined together by a white tent, at the door of which stood the womenfolk, and amongst them the distracted mother, who gave me as cordial a welcome as if I had been the head of the College of Physicians. She asked me at once if I could do anything for her boy, and of course I said I could. I had read up my Burroughes and Wellcome pamphlet before starting, and felt myself equal to any emergency after that. The poor boy, about twelve years of age, was evidently in the last stage of collapse, as they had no medicine, and only a little brandy to give him, and I was very glad to have the necessary remedies handy, in the shape of quinine and Warberg tincture. After leaving directions for the sick lad, old Basadanote showed me as usual round his waggons and encampment, the most picturesque item of which was five lovely Burchell's zebras, perfectly tame and standing quietly munching their hay under the trees. In most cases these zebras, when captured, become quite docile in a few days, and will walk about the camp like dogs, with no further restraint than being picketed for the night.

It will be a long time before the memory of that camp scene fades from my mind, with its koodoo heads leaning against the waggon, its suspicious Boer dogs, its stacks of biltong under the drying sheds, its white-capped Dutch women flitting about under the great trees, Zulus cleaning assegais or attending to the horses, and zebras that whisk their tails continuously in the blazing sun.

Amongst other animals that Basadanote had killed were a couple of Lichtenstein's hartebeests. These he had shot to the east of the main road beneath Gong's Rant, where we had left Frau Van Staden and her family. I should like to record this here, as Lichtenstein's hartebeest has not previously been known to extend nearly so far west as this; in fact, it is seldom found westward of the plains of the Sabi, Busi, Gorangosi, and Pungwi Rivers. I found a small troop west of the Nuanetsi, and again another near the Lundi. Since the species is now being hunted more in its proper home, a few troops are possibly seeking for peace and quietness by moving farther in from the coast.

Oom Roelef, having summed up the extent of the game on the Bubye, said we had better press on, as he feared the young Basadanotes with us were going to attempt a "bluff," *i.e.* to follow the old hunter, who knew where the game was on the Nuanetsi, and cut in after the buffaloes before we got a chance. So we decided to trek on to the big river, and there give them the slip, as we were far too many in company, and the Basadanotes were evidently trying to make use of us. After some months of slow and weary travelling we had really seen very little game, but at last came daily increasing signs of all the bigger game; we hoped, therefore, to obtain at least a sight of some of them.

Crossing the sandy bed of the Bubye on the morning of 19th June, we entered the great forest Thirstland, which lies between that river and the Nuanetsi, or Manitze, as it is sometimes called. In this expanse of some hundred square miles there is but one water-hole on the old hunters' trail, Elands Fontein they call it, since so many elands congregated there a few years ago. To this water it is a day and a half's hard trekking from the Bubye, and we saw nothing on the way but a couple of splendid cock ostriches, which one of the Basadanotes admitted he had a good chance at, but failed to score. The male ostrich looks very showy and imposing when he first starts to run, the beautiful white feathers on his wings and wing coverts being raised and spread out as I have endeavoured to represent in one of the small Karroo sketches.

Elands Fontein itself is but another of the usual Afric's sunny mud-holes, the water being quite undrinkable, except when made into strong tea, and even then it had a sickly, nauseous taste that remained on the palate for some time.

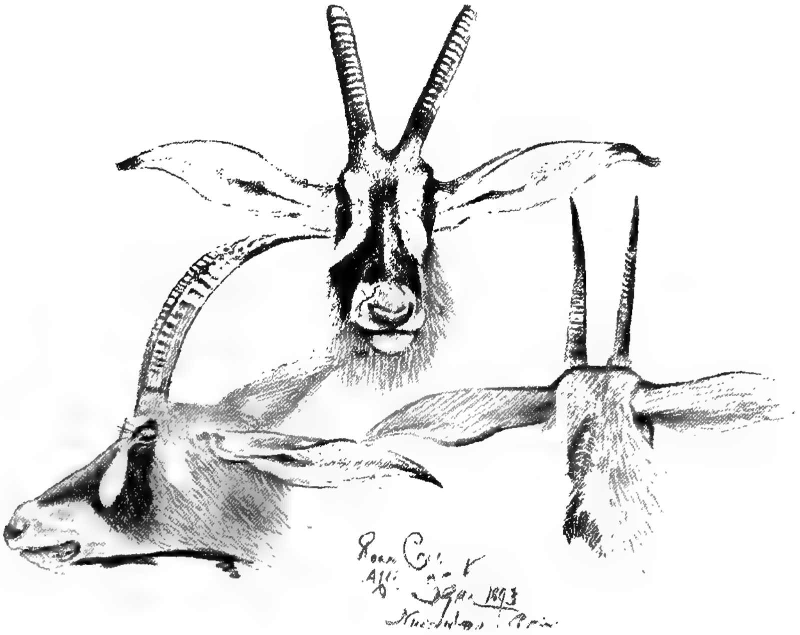
19*th June* (Elands Fontein).—The Dutchmen, grievously disappointed at getting no game by the Bubye, say that if the game has trekked from Nuanetsi they will return home. Personally I shall be very glad if they do, as one gets awfully sick of their eternal whining, and I can go on with Oom Roelef into the "fly," where we are bound to find game sooner or later. And now came another disturbing element that none of us had reckoned on. Petrus returned to-day and reported that whilst out hunting he had encountered a native who was evidently a Matabele slave, and who told him he had been sent by his master to turn us back, and that the Matabele intended to kill every white man in their hunting veldt this winter.

This made things assume a more serious aspect in the minds of the Dutchmen. They considered that when troubles were brewing it would not do to leave the old lady and girls with such poor protection; so three days later—when we got to the Nuanetsi—Hert and Petrus returned to Gong, and we saw no more of them for some months.

I could not help thinking, about this time, what a lot of delightful fallacies the Englishman of romantic ideas conjures up about Africa as he sits comfortably ensconced in his arm-chair at the club, surrounded with luxuries of every description. To him Africa does not look half such a rough place as it is painted by those who have been there. On the map the country seems to be intersected with cool rivers and innumerable spots which rejoice in the name of fontein ; and through the smoke of a good cigar it is easy to picture the troops of antelope, herds of elephant and buffalo moving down to the sunlit pools to drink, and, wallowing in their depths, the hippopotamus and the alligator. But oh the fraud of those "sunny fountains" that some of us have been taught to believe in ! I wish I had here to-day the dear old cleric who wrote that mission hymn, and could see him squirm. It is a beautiful hymn—that "Greenland's icy mountains"—but of its geology perhaps the less said the better. Most of the natural features of the universe as described here probably emanated from the good parson's own romantic brain, or from some favourite Sunday School book of the goody-goody order. There are no mountains to speak of in that world of ice ; and as to "India's coral strand," coral is not a product of the sea insects of the Indian Ocean, but of the islands of the Pacific. "Afric's sunny fountains" ! Imagination, dear reader, pure imagination. So, too, are the "spicey breezes" that sweep over "Ceylon's isle," unless the aroma from the native quarters may be held to justify the phrase. Still it is a fine soul-stirring hymn for all that, though, like some famous artists' pictures, it is not a bit like nature. Many and many a half-crown has it caused to be dropped by tender-hearted old ladies into the mission-bag, though the money would have been far better expended on our own suffering humanity at home. For whatever may be done by such men as Livingstone, Moffat, Mackay of Uganda, or Bishop Hannington, there is nothing to be gained, so far as I can see, by sending out such feeble specimens of missionaries, soft in head as well as in heart, as one too often comes across in foreign lands. They hinder rather than help the cause they are sent to advance. In fact, it is only very great men—born leaders of men—that can obtain a real grasp of the mind of the already happy savage, and place him on a plane where he can appreciate the spiritual advantages of Christianity.

All the grass round here for miles is burning. This is done by natives to entice the game, as the first rains on the charred and blackened surface of the ground bring up the young grass shoots, which are an immediate source of attraction.

"When things are at their worst they are sure to mend" is a good maxim for the hunter, as for every one else. In proof of it, the day after the above was written the old man and I broke our vein of ill-luck, and were exceptionally fortunate with the game for many days. Not to weary my readers, however, with tales of slaughter that may seem to them unnecessary and therefore unwarranted, I will only describe in detail the death of one of each of the species which we secured. I say we because, although I did the shooting, the old man was instrumental in bringing to bag at least half the animals, which I should certainly have lost had it not been for his "veldt" knowledge and woodcraft. Within a ride from the Nuanetsi is a pool where we intended to spend the night before going on to the big river and establishing a standing camp. My companion and I were approaching this, riding across country under some low hills where the country was somewhat park-like, when the movement of some animal caught my eye, and looking round—for we had passed the spot—I saw what I knew at once was a fine roan antelope jump up from beneath a bush and canter slowly away. A shout from me caused Van Staden to turn round, and we at once gave chase. The antelope, apparently not at all frightened, went about 200 yards only before wheeling round in some thorns to gaze at us. Large as is the body of this fine animal, I had great difficulty in making out his shoulders clearly as he stood in the shade of the bushes. It was a fine old cow with a fair head, and not more than fifty yards away when, jumping off



HEAD OF A ROAN ANTELOPE COW

Showing the peculiar shape of the ears in life, and the position of the white tufts of hair that stand out and cover the suborbital glands.

my horse, I fired, and it fell to the shot, but quickly recovering made off at best pace on three legs. The moment I fired Van Staden took up the running, a plan we found far the best to adopt when the bush was not too thick, as I could then jump on my horse and follow him at once. He would then stop and point out the animal to me as it stood for the second time. In this case the roan only went about 100 yards, so I got very close up and rolled her over with a shot in the heart. What I was much surprised at was the noise she made in receiving the bullet—bellowing loudly, almost like a buffalo—as I never heard any of the other antelopes utter a sound under similar circumstances. The roan antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*[1]) at one time ranged from Cape Colony up to Central Africa; but its southern limit may now be said to be the Northern Transvaal, its western range Damaraland, its northern not yet clearly defined, though the species is said to have been seen as far north as the Masai country. This animal, however, is just as likely as not to have been the nearly allied species "bakeri," which is known to extend to the verge of the Southern Soudan and equatorial provinces. It has, however, according to Mr. Jackson, been obtained near Lamu, opposite Zanzibar.

On the Veldt the roan has a fine and noble appearance, though it does look a bit "front heavy." It carries its head very finely, but not with the grace and the nobility of the sable. In many respects it resembles its handsomer cousin. Its habits are much the same, being found alike in open or enclosed country, though on the whole it evinces a greater predilection for the great plains with scattered bush, while the sable is fond of climbing about the low rocky hills, or in bush at the base of kopjies. The roan antelope is also a much more regular drinker than the sable, which can go for long periods without requiring water. A troop of the former, if undisturbed, come every evening to about the same spot on some favourite sluit of standing water, while the latter drink irregularly and nearly always about daybreak.

Although the roan is a very large animal, standing about 5 feet at the shoulder, the dull reddish-grey of its hide makes it very hard to distinguish in bush, and it would often be passed even in the open lands but for its shy nature, which causes it to start lumbering away as soon as it sees a man on a horse. The sable will stand and stare at you quite close sometimes, as much as to say, "Who the devil are you?" The koodoo will creep under the shadow of a thorn bush and hope to "Goodness gracious" you won't notice him; but the roan will say "Good-morning" as soon as he sees you.

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[1] I do not believe in the old blauwbok of Cape Colony as a good species. The only specimen of this antelope, which is reputed to be extinct, is now in the Paris Museum. It is, I think, only a small, faded, and badly-set-up female roan.

Roans seem to keep in much smaller parties than the sables, about a dozen cows being the limit, whilst the old males live much to themselves, and are more difficult to find than they are to bag. When running the roans adopt single file, and each follows closely the steps and movements of the old cow who generally leads. They have a very fair power of endurance, but I think that any decent horse, if properly handled, would run them to a standstill. All hunters, however, are agreed that one should be careful in such experiments, for this antelope is doubtless the most dangerous of all the tribe, there being plenty of authenticated instances of the animals turning and charging furiously when pressed too hard. Mr. Banks, shortly after I met him in Mashonaland, was charged by an old bull he had wounded and followed up too closely in some thick bush. He saw the antelope enter a patch of wait-a-bit before him, and followed as quickly as possible, expecting to see his victim going slowly away before him. Instead of that, however, before he quite knew where he was, the roan turned and charged straight at the hunter, who slipped off over the flank of his steed just as the infuriated beast stuck his horns into the horse's neck. Mr. Banks managed to regain his feet and to shoot the roan in the head before he could strike him; and then found his horse was so injured that he was obliged to shoot him also.

It will be seen, therefore, that none of these larger African antelope, except perhaps the good-natured and inoffensive koodoo,[1] are to be trifled with, and least of all the roan. Nearly every hunter of wide experience who has seen much of these animals says the same thing—that he is decidedly dangerous to approach, whether wounded or not—and has some tale to tell about his pluck. The Dutchmen, who are generally pretty much at sea as to the names of the wild game, have never quite made up their minds what to call this animal. They consider that he has absolutely no claims to legitimacy on any score, and half the members of that nation whom you meet will christen it either "bastard eland" or "bastard gemsbok," both of which are equally ridiculous and inappropriate. Though the animal, when viewed critically, is on the whole imposing and even beautiful, when seen running it looks decidedly clumsy, and wanting in both proportion and elegance; yet the head, when well set up and viewed among other specimens of African fauna, has a striking and pleasing

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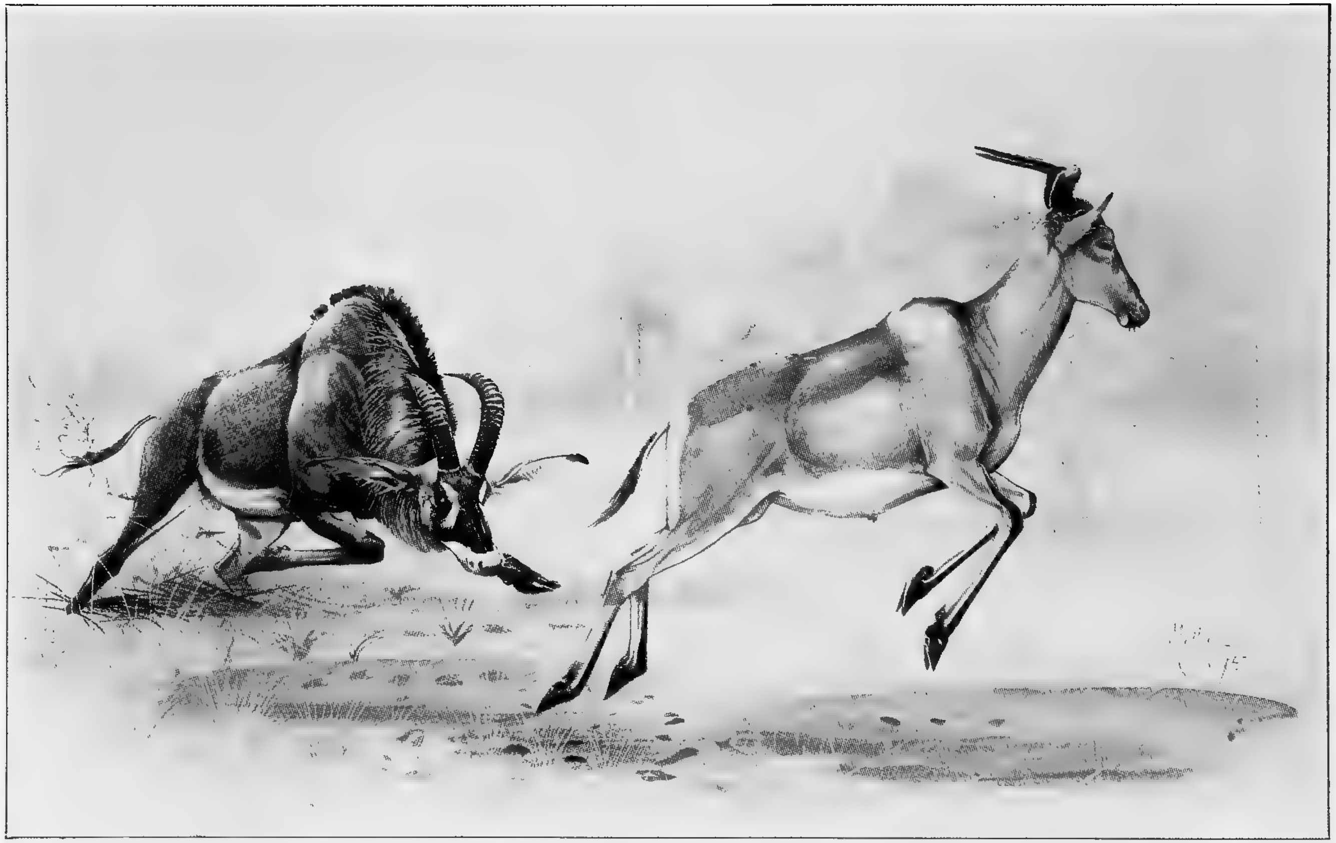
[1] Captain Swayne, in his admirable work on Somaliland, gives an instance of a koodoo bull charging a native who had attempted to stop his exit from a gully.



A ROAN ANTELOPE EVICTING A LICHTENSTEIN'S HARTEBEEST FROM THE BEDS MADE BY THE LATTER

appearance. The fine blending of colours on the face, the white switches of hair over the lachrymal glands standing out over the black of the cheeks, the fine rough neck, and the long queerly shaped ears, all tend to give it the wild game look it certainly possesses. The horns themselves, though not to be compared with those of the waterbuck, koodoos, and sable, are beautifully annulated, and look quite in proportion. Ward gives the maximum of males as 33 inches, and females 30½ inches. I would call the attention of the reader, if a naturalist, to the very peculiar shape of the ear, and the way that the white whisps drop from above the lachrymal sinus, making the hairs stand out slightly as they do in life.

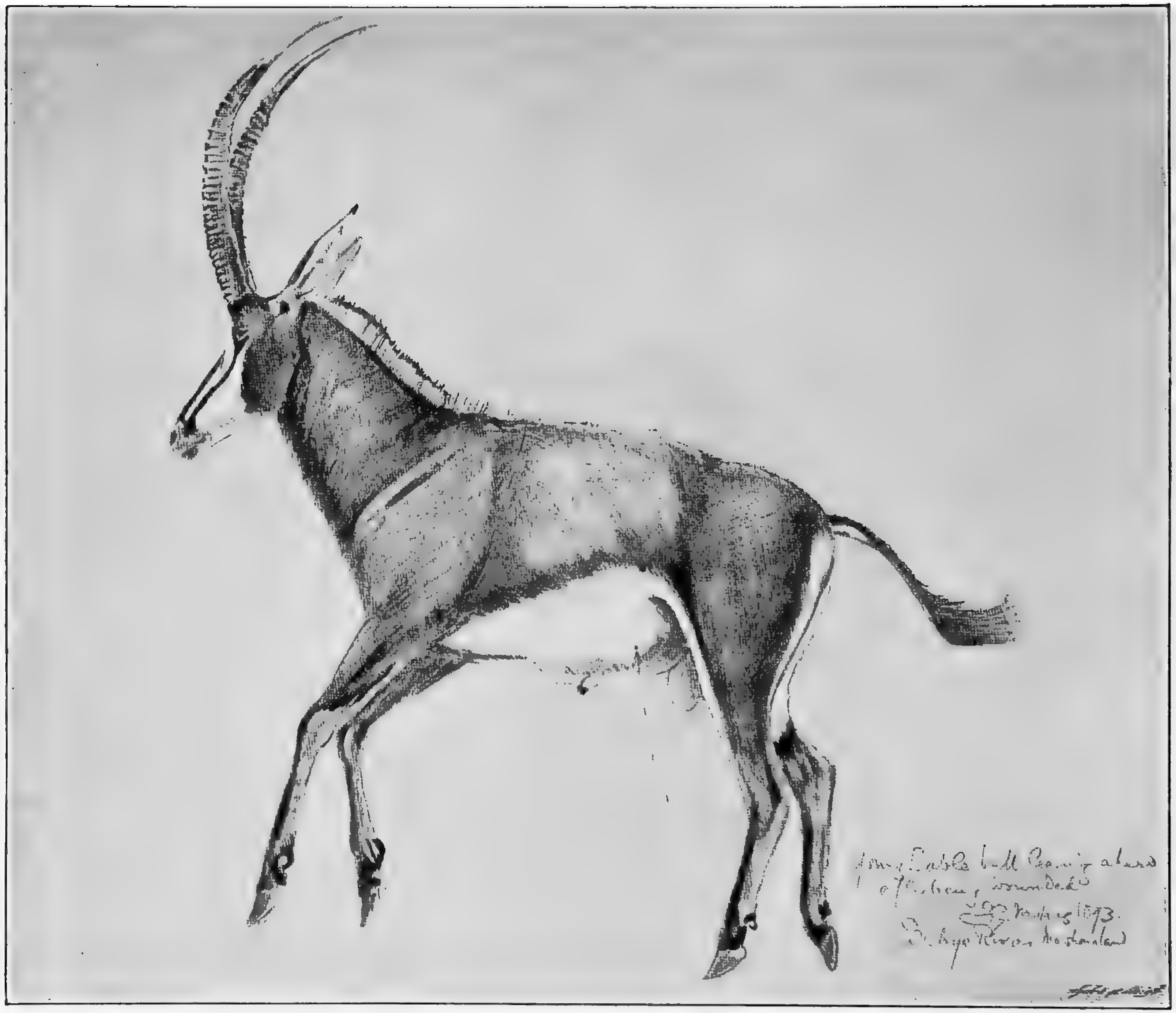
Of all the larger antelope, except perhaps the eland, the roan is the easiest to kill. If the hunter follows a troop up they will frequently stop and allow several shots to be fired at them ; but he must above all things keep them in good view, for once out of sight the roans know they are likely to be followed up, and it is next to impossible to approach them, their sense of sight and smell is so keen, and they so commonly start running long before you have spotted them.

We also saw here much fresh spoor of tssessbe, koodoo, Burchell's zebra, buffalo and pallah, and hartebeest, which were without doubt Lichtenstein's, as the common hartebeest is unknown in Mashonaland. From our ultimate search for these animals, there appeared to be only two troops in the neighbourhood ; and though I hunted several days, both going in and coming out, I never once succeeded in properly viewing them. Tace, however, twice obtained several shots at one of the troops, and wounded two bulls, both of which he lost.

Lichtenstein's hartebeest, called by the Dutch "Moff hartebeest," takes the place of the common hartebeest, after the Limpopo is passed ; and confining itself to the rivers of the east coast of Mashonaland, is not to be met with in the heart of Africa till the Zambesi is reached. From thence northward it is said to be the common hartebeest, till Cokei, Senegalensis, Jacksoni, and Tora take its place in the north-east. In common with several of the other African antelope, the old male Lichtenstein's hartebeest has a habit of returning to the same spot to rest every evening, if undisturbed. We saw several of their lairs scraped out most comfortably in the red sand. They were quite fresh, and the great quantity of their manure showed how long the same animals had been resorting to this spot. Being of a quiet and inoffensive disposition, this hartebeest evidently suffers itself to be bullied by the roan antelope and Burchell's zebra. Both of these are said to be fond of the beds of the Lichtenstein, and are in the habit of evicting him with horns and teeth when they take a fancy to his comfortable quarters. As I did not myself see this animal in a wild state, I can say nothing as to his appearance and movements; but those who have shot him say that he has a particularly bright and shining exterior, due to the delicate and pale colours of his hide, and that, like the tssessbe, it has a clumsy and "humpy" appearance when on the move, though it gets over the ground in a manner which no horse can rival.

At the pool by the Nuanetsi we were left by the Basadanotes, who trekked on to the river; and I was glad of it, though they were good enough fellows in their way. We had been in camp about an hour, and I was drawing the roan antelope's head, when Petrus came in with a fine young sable antelope bull he had just shot, and Peter with a pallah and a Burchell's zebra, whilst Tace had wounded and lost a roan antelope and a Lichtenstein's hartebeest. This began to look more like business, and our hopes now rose considerably. Young Dutchmen are very like overgrown children, and we were all as merry as sand-boys over tea and marrow-bones till some one suddenly jumped up and cried out, "Kake darso Petrus peart dikkop sickter ha cre!" or words that sounded like that, meaning in plain English, "Look there! there's Petrus's horse has got the big horse-sickness." There was not a doubt about it, for the poor brute, which was quite well an hour before, was standing with lowered head, heaving flanks, and running nose and eyes. We all sympathised with Petrus, who saw the greater part of his worldly possessions dying before his eyes, and did our best to console the owner, but two hours afterwards the poor beast lay down for the third time and died quietly. That night Teenie, who though not a bit of a sportsman, still cherished hopes of taking home some hyæna skins, tried his usual bait, a strychnined piece of meat, part of the carcase of the dead horse.

The following morning I was lying awake before sunrise, when my attention was attracted by a series of hoarse barks emitted at intervals in the distance. By and by the sounds became distincter, and resolved themselves into a cross between the bellowing of a jackass and the hoarse bark of an aged collie dog. Looking from my bed beneath the waggon, I saw that my old friend was already up, and lighting his pipe at the dying embers. "Ah, Jan," he said, as he observed me arising, "do you hear the quaggas coming down to drink?" It was hardly light enough to shoot, so we sat and talked round the fire for a bit, and then I started out a short distance to see if I could find any of the Burchell's zebras that had been calling. About 500 yards away, on some rising ground, I made out a lot of moving forms, and presently saw a fine troop of


Young Sable bull coming along
of the herd, wounded
[illegible] March 1893.
[illegible] River Mashonaland

STUDY OF A YOUNG SABLE BULL

these animals galloping along the side of the hill, followed by a pillar of dust. A shot was out of the question, so I retraced my steps to the camp for breakfast, before proceeding on our trek through the bush to the Nuanetsi. Burchell's zebra,[1] the common zebra of South Africa, has this habit of galloping away from the water after drinking. They are very cautious animals, and proceed slowly to the pools before daybreak, stopping and neighing frequently, hoping no doubt for an answer from others already there, to assure them that the coast is clear. As they are a favourite prey of the lion, who lies in waiting for them at the water-holes, they become very nervous and watchful at this hour of the day, and immediately after drinking gallop off for miles, apparently glad to get away from the dangerous spot. An examination of the spoor showed that this was almost invariably the case, whether in a disturbed country or otherwise, as they consider the lion their chief foe. At times they show an almost stupid disregard of man during the warm hours of the day.

Some weeks after this the old man and I came on a troop of these pretty creatures in quite open country. There were about seventy of them, which would be a very big troop anywhere, and I must say they looked splendid. Of course, as I did not want to shoot any, they trotted round us in a big semicircle at about sixty yards, reminding me strongly of a spectacular scene in a circus. They stopped frequently and surveyed us with curiosity, having probably never seen a white man before. The hides of both the zebra and the leopard, gaudy as they appear to us in our sombre climate, are amongst the wonders of creation. Put a dead leopard or zebra under a tree in Africa, and you will hardly notice him at fifteen yards' distance, the blendings of the yellow and black, when suffused by the sun's glare, are so remarkably like the dried grass and stemmed trees around.

The habits of Burchell's zebra have been so often described that little remains to be said of them. Like all the wild asses, they are full of curiosity, and easily shot. They can also be readily captured by a good man on a good horse, with the aid of a "fang-stock." The fang-stock is a stout stick about 5 feet long, furnished at the end with a running noose, which is dropped over the animal's head as the rider ranges up alongside. When taken in this way, they do not fight half so much as one would expect; indeed, after being tied up to a post in camp for a week, they often require no further taming, walking about like so many donkeys, and becoming almost too friendly. They are not, however, to be trusted implicitly, for though not nearly so savage as the mountain zebra of Cape Colony, they can give a very nasty bite.

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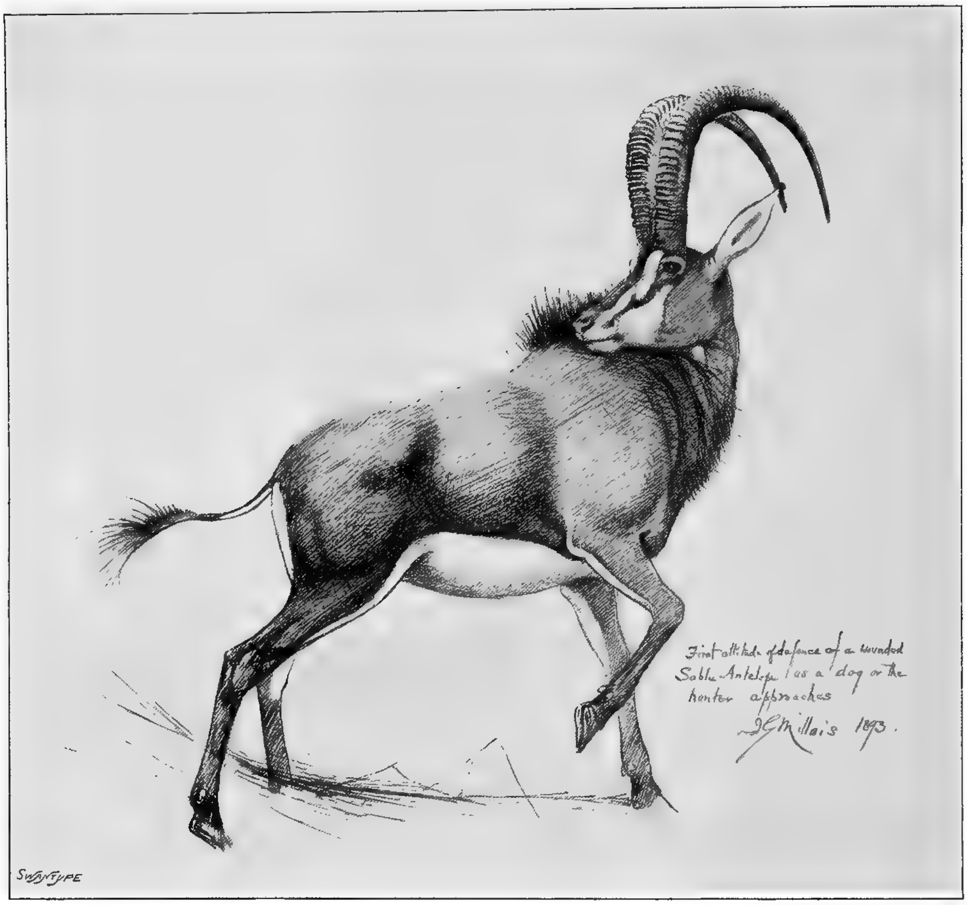
[1] One of the best descriptions of a zebra was recently given by a small Scotch laddie in a Highland school, when asked to describe the general appearance of the animal: "Weel," he replied, "it's just a cuddy (donkey) wi' a footba' jersey on."

As I strolled into camp I saw Piet Landsberg standing by the pool, not twenty yards from my waggon, and beckoning to me with his finger, which he presently pointed in the direction of the water below him. There lay in the natural attitude of drinking—exactly in the position in which death had overtaken him—a most beautiful old male leopard. Teenie had aimed at a crow with his strychnine and killed a pigeon. The effect of the poison had been so instantaneous that the leopard had not rolled over on its side, but had just given up its life with the first few laps of water it had drunk; and there it lay with its nose in the water, and the morning sun playing on its beautifully-spotted back—as fine a subject as any painter or photographer could wish for.

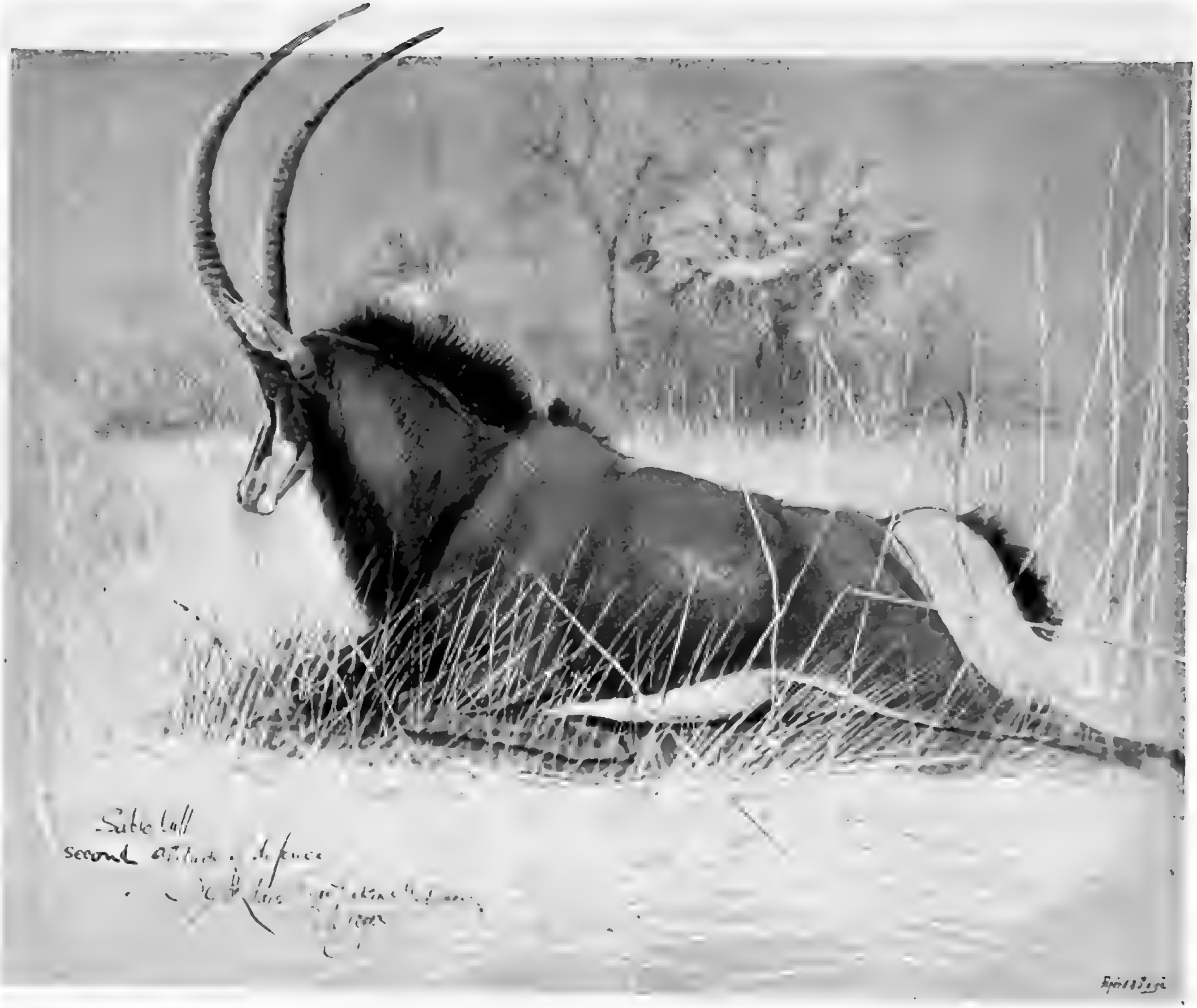


First attitude of defence of a wounded Sable Antelope as a dog or the hunter approaches

J G Millais 1893.

FIRST ATTITUDE OF DEFENCE OF A WOUNDED SABLE BULL

We intended hunting immediately after breakfast, as we were now in the


Sable bull
second attitude of defence

SECOND ATTITUDE OF DEFENCE OF A SABLE BULL

midst of the game, so I had no time to even attempt a sketch. During this day, though full of hope, and all of us seeing game, we got nothing. Towards the afternoon the old man and I found a fine troop of koodoos, among which was a good bull. Though the cows all stood well, the cunning old rascal kept well in the background, and after half an hour of about the coarsest bit of riding I ever experienced (for he led us through all the worst wait-a-bit he could find), we eventually lost him without a shot being fired. We arrived home dishevelled, discomfited, and desperately sore from the thorns.

The following day a start was made for the river, where we hoped to find enough game to induce us to stay and hunt for two or three weeks. The journey itself was a rough one, and as we were striking straight across country where no previous trail had been made, our progress was slow, and had to be carefully undertaken to avoid smashing up the waggons against the trunks of trees and sunken sluits. Prince again showed his consummate skill as a driver, and we reached beautiful Nuanetsi about mid-day the same day.

During our ride an incident occurred which put Van Staden and myself into the best of spirits; for not only was spoor of all the game fresh and evident, but I succeeded in killing our first old sable bull, and a fine specimen too. Its death, however, was attended by an unfortunate accident, which, though I can but blame myself for my own hastiness, was in a great measure unavoidable.

In general appearance and sporting qualities the sable antelope (*Hippotragus niger*) yields the palm to none of his kind. There is about the whole animal that indescribable charm that is so intensely African and so characteristic of the wild life. Its strong individuality must ever stand out in the minds of those who have been so fortunate as to see and shoot it, and it is certainly one of the chief objects of interest in the splendid fauna of that country. Apart from its satin-like hide, sweeping horns, erect mane, and great strength, the sable antelope presents an appearance of fearlessness and nobility that is very striking, to say the least of it.[1] Though the koodoo, when dead, surpasses his rival in elegance of external form, he is but a skulker, and makes but a poor show beside the sable on the Veldt. I would say, if such a comparison be allowable, the two hold their own like the rival beauties of a London drawing-room. The fair one sits quietly in a corner, charming her immediate circle with her graceful shyness and beauty, and people take sly glances at her from the other end of the room, while pretending to devote their attention to some one else, while her black-eyed rival flaunts into the room as if she owned the entire show, and commands the attention of all eyes by her more brilliant and striking charms. The one attracts attention slowly, the other commands it at once.

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[1] Any one who has seen a wild sable antelope galloping cannot fail to be struck by its resemblance to the unicorn. The whole appearance of the animal bears a much closer likeness to that mythical creature than the gemsbuck. In outline every point is similar except the horns, and even those on the head of an immature, when seen in profile, are not so very dissimilar. If there is any African animal alive to-day which is the original of our national crest, it is the sable.

Roughly speaking, the height of this grand antelope at the shoulder is about 4½ feet; but he looks much taller, owing to his great shoulders and unusually thick neck ornamented with its erect crest of hair. The tail is long, and has a good wisp of hair at the end, which, like the tails of the roan antelope and the waterbuck, swings from side to side as the animal gallops along. Like the koodoo, the horns of the sable are its chief glory, and the noble manner in which the head is carried by the buck when on the move is a splendid thing to see. Unlike all deer, and nearly all antelope, the sable when running arches the neck instead of raising the chin—a habit which adds greatly to its pictorial attractions. The body of the sable, as will be seen from my rough sketch of the bull shot by young Basadanote—a sketch taken immediately after death—is short and very thick-set; but when the animal carries a fine head, say 40 inches, the horns look at a distance as if arching over the whole length of its body. A good adult head shows 36 inches of horn, though heads of 40 inches are not uncommon. I was exceptionally fortunate in the four bulls I secured, as they measured over the curve 36, 36½, 41, and 45¼ inches, the last a grand specimen, of which I shall speak later on.

The largest, as well as probably the best head that has ever been secured, is recorded in Ward's *Horn Measurements*. It was shot by Mr. Barber, of Johannesburg, in the low countries, and measures 46 inches.[1] The range of the sable antelope in South Africa is principally confined to the east and north of Mashonaland and Matabeleland until the Zambesi is reached. Selous found it in small numbers as far up the Chobe as he went, and states that in that country the average of heads is finer than elsewhere. There is every reason to believe that it ranges right westward from here to the Quinine River, for it is common everywhere northward in the Barotsi, Mushakalumbwi, and Lake territories. Sir John Willoughby mentions having seen it near Kilimanjaro in East Africa, and Mr. Jackson says it is common in certain localities in German East Africa.

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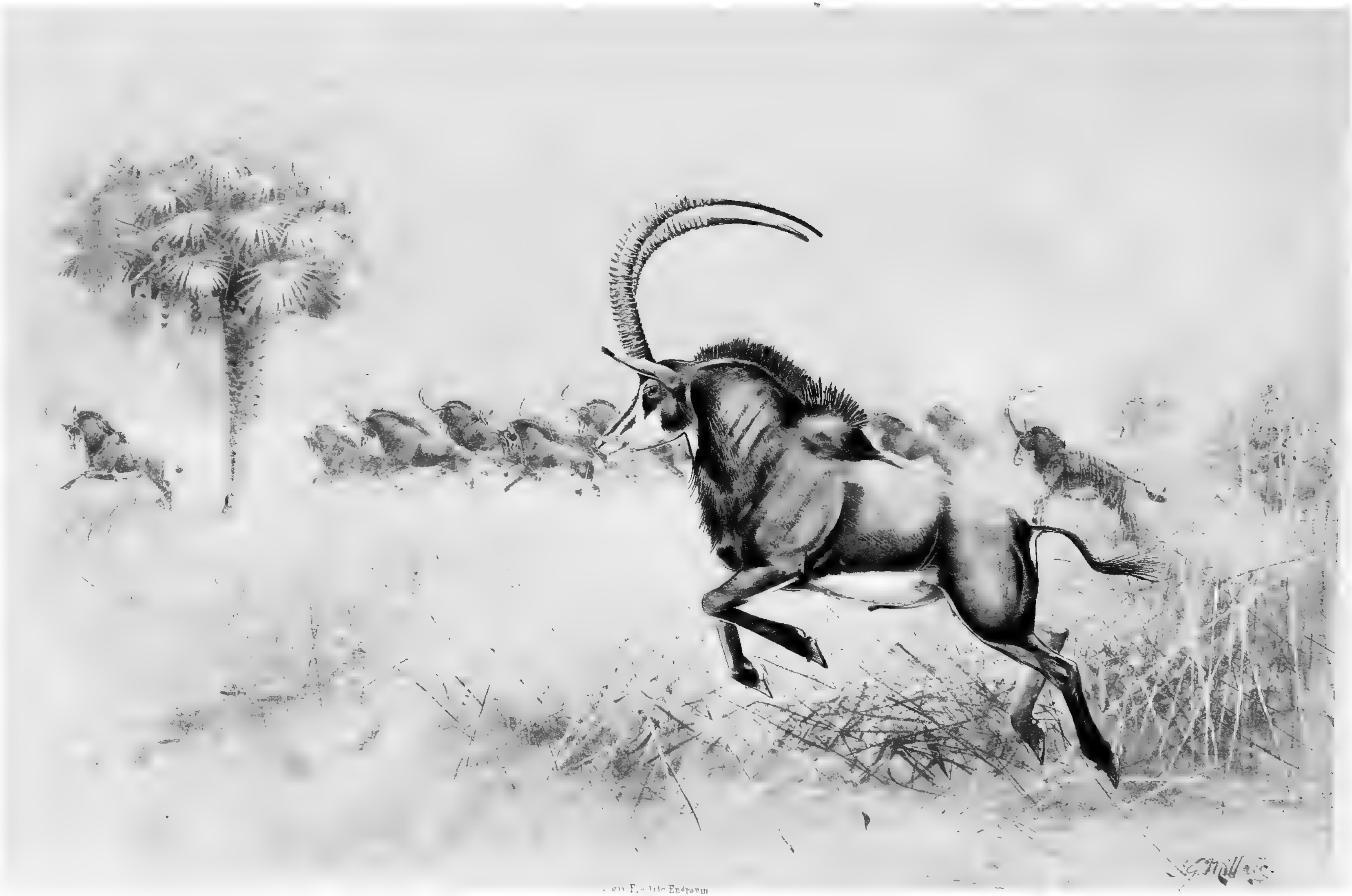
[1] Since these lines were written, a specimen with horns measuring 48 inches has been obtained by Mr. Coryndon from natives in the country to the east of Barotsiland.



Swan Electric Engraving

A troop of Sable Antelope on the move

The usual herd of sable seen in Mashonaland is generally ten to thirty cows, and quite young bulls, with one old bull, who is easily noticeable by his great neck and his habit of standing apart from the others. This old bull is generally the last to run, and keeps his position well in rear of the troop when on the move. Mr. Banks, a successful English sportsman in Mashonaland, encountered shortly after I met him a herd of over seventy of these antelopes, as well as a great herd of elands. These two species probably become gregarious to a certain extent, whilst moving out of the tsetse fly country in September to get the young green grass that is just shooting up in the charred burnt lands.

The sable is a villain to run, once he is fairly under weigh, so it is best to make as sure as possible of your first two shots at the old bull, otherwise you will probably lose him altogether, even though he be badly wounded. All the Dutchmen affirm that you cannot ride the sable to a standstill ; but I very much doubt this. I think a good man on a well-fed horse in open country should be more than a match for him.[1] Still, it is not worth trying unless you are well and plentifully horsed, as you will ruin your nag by playing the game too often, especially when you are in a country where you cannot get mealies or Kaffir corn. The endurance and strength of the sable are very great, much greater than that of any of the large antelopes ; but he has no advantage over them in point of speed, and a decent horse, if made to go, can range up to the game in a mile or under. Some men prefer this style of shooting, and it is no doubt very effective, but then to enjoy it to perfection you require not only a first-class horse, but a perfectly-trained one, which is about as hard a thing to get as a fat Government appointment.

A sportsman need never be afraid of filling a sable bull with too much lead. He will carry away an amount of shot that will at first surprise the hunter, so it is best to keep on firing till he is *hors de combat.* He is, moreover, a very dangerous brute when in possession of more than one leg, and should not be approached nearer than thirty yards, unless he is down. As you come near a wounded bull, whether he be lying down or standing up, you will see him draw in his head, which he slightly lowers while giving vent to a loud, coughing snort, which means to say, "Look out !" Then, if you have any regard for a whole skin, you had better lose no time in putting an end to him.

This loud snort is the only noise made by the sable, and I have heard an old cow tune up in like manner on getting the wind. Owing to the nature of the bush country in which they live, nearly all the larger antelopes habitually move in Indian file when running; but, after watching them carefully, I think sables are more inclined to bunch in the centre of the troop when running than any other antelopes, except the pallah. At all times they run in a compacter formation than roan antelope, and far more than waterbuck, which sometimes maintain quite a big interval between individuals. When the bulls arrive at two years of age or thereabouts, I fancy that they are ejected from the troop, and the lord himself has many a tough battle to hold his own with the rival adult bulls travelling in search of a harem. These single wandering males (often fully adult) are the ones most commonly met with by the sportsman. They lead a solitary life till they are capable of annexing a troop of their own, and then they take good care to keep it. From his size and strength there can be little doubt that a sable bull is the most formidable and plucky of all the antelopes, though he has not the reputation of being quite so dangerous to man as the roan antelope. The stories about this animal being more than a match for the lion are no doubt quite true, and a fight between these two splendid beasts is the subject of a fine picture by the late Thomas Baines, whose work as an artist of African wild life is practically unknown in this country.[1] Mr. Baines has represented the lion being speared through as it has sprung on the back of the sable bull going at full gallop; but I doubt whether this has ever been seen in real life, for all the natives affirm that the sable when collared generally lies down, and invites a charge on its back, turning its head sideways as represented in my sketch, so as to give the horns a deadly sidelong thrust, which must be pretty crushing to even a lion. The rapidity with which it slashes its head for the horns to sweep over its back is quite remarkable, being such as one could hardly expect in so big an animal. I have now in my possession the skin of the second sable bull which I killed. It was scored all down one flank, showing where a lion had hold of him a short time previously. He had evidently beaten off his antagonist successfully. This mode of striking on the part of the sable is so effective and remarkable that I give one or two little pen-and-ink sketches of the animal's attitudes as they impressed me.

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[1] Mr. Selous says : "As a rule, the sable antelope runs very swiftly, and has good bottom ; but in this respect different individuals differ considerably, as is the case with all animals ; and I have run down, without much difficulty, individual sable antelopes and roan antelope and one gemsbuck, whilst others have gone clean away from me."

Near the Lundi River a native turned up at my camp one morning and brought with him the teeth and claws of a lion, which he said he had found dead the previous year by the side of a sable antelope. By means of Office and Prince I extracted all the information I could get out of him. The two animals, he insisted, had killed each other, but the lion's skin having been torn to pieces by hyænas and vultures, he could not see the horn-thrusts in its side.

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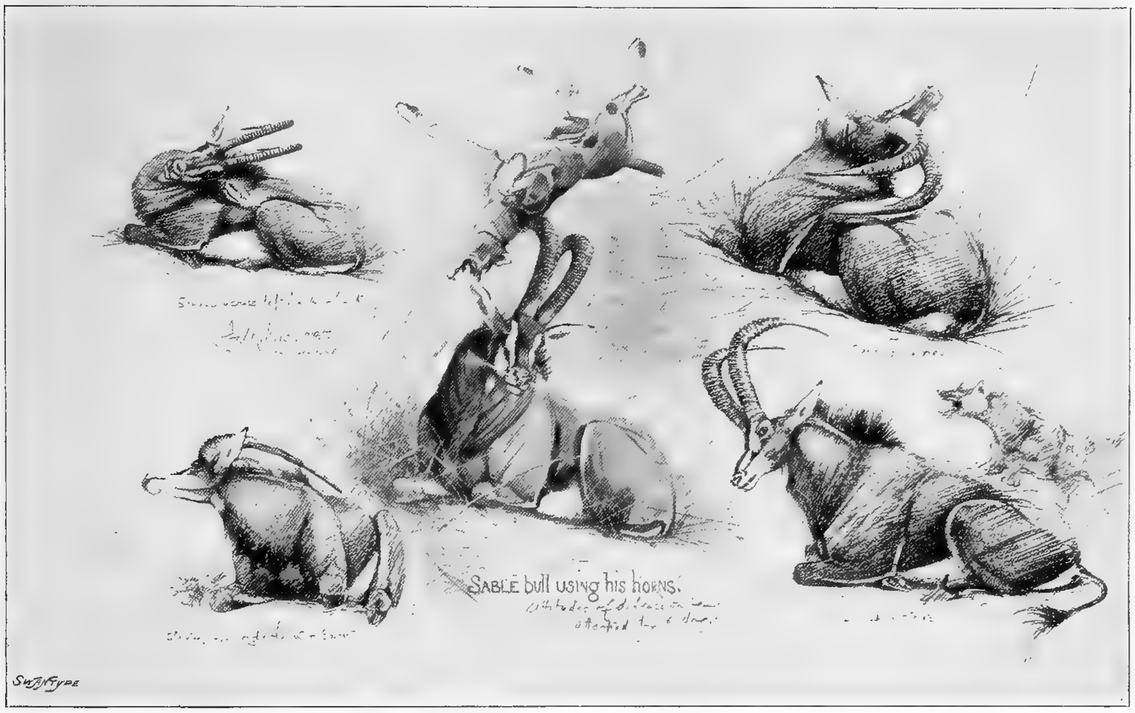
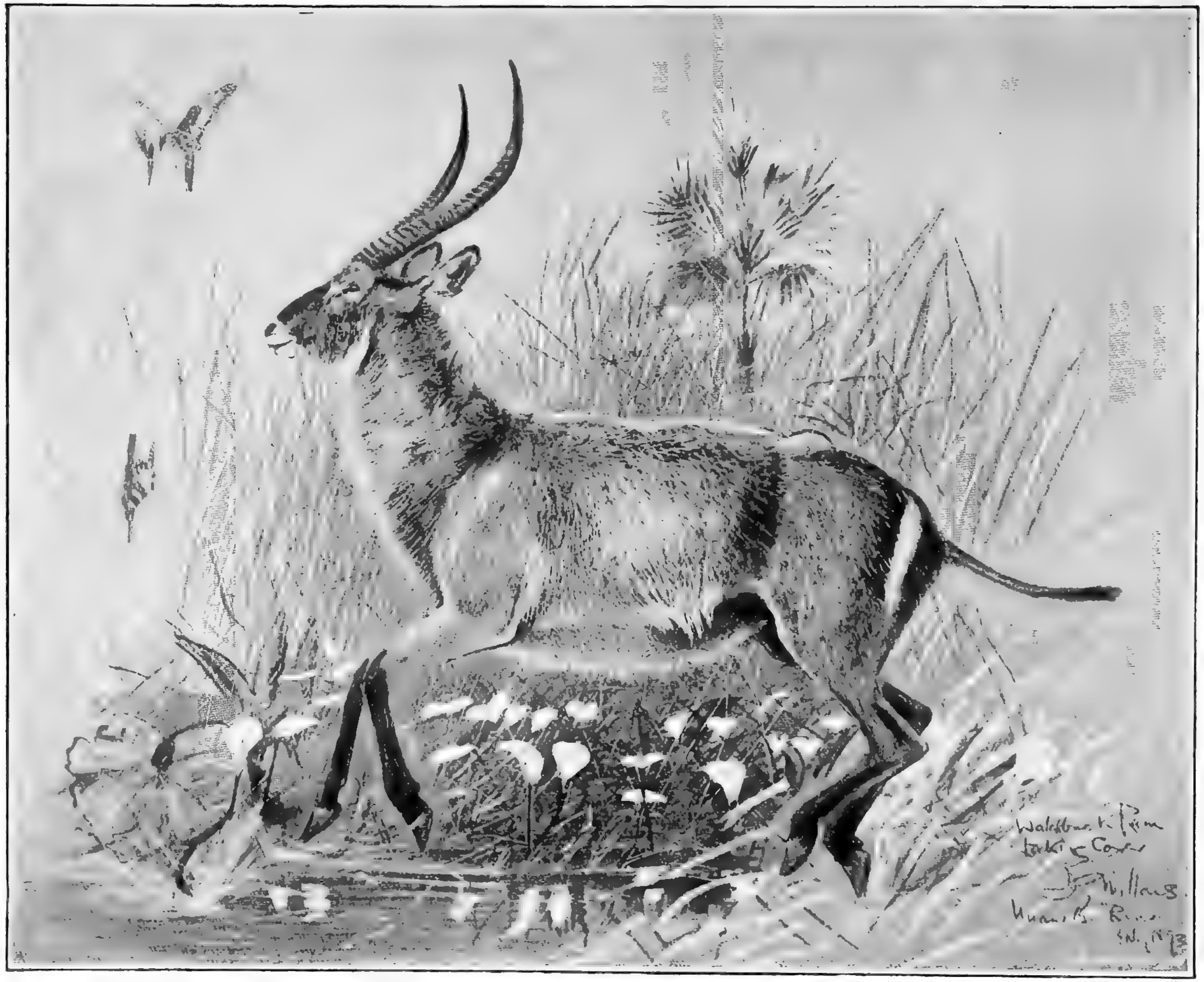
[1] A very fine collection of this artist's works has lately been on view at the Crystal Palace (1895). The pictures, though perhaps not very great as works of art, nevertheless give the beholder a better impression of South Africa and its bygone life than any others yet exhibited.

Some two hours after our start the country became quite suddenly more beautiful, the trees larger, and the bush so open that one could easily see any animal at 200 or 300 yards' distance. My companion and I were, as usual, riding ahead of the waggon, to direct its course through the bush, when suddenly the old man turned in his saddle and said quietly, "Zwart-vit-pens!" (sable antelope). Following the direction of his gaze, I made out at once a large black-and-white antelope standing looking at us at about 300 yards to my left. We were so fairly in the open that there was no chance of his standing for us to approach. He saw us at once, and starting off at a slow canter in the direction of a small rocky kopjie about 500 yards away, and gradually slackening speed almost to walking pace, vanished behind the hill.


SABLE bull using his horns.
SWAINTYPE

SKETCHES OF A SABLE BULL AT BAY

Here was luck for us; nothing better could have happened. We galloped up to the base of the hill, jumped off, ran up a few disjointed boulders, and then looked over, when a sight presented itself to my eyes which I shall never forget while I live. There, not 50 yards off, standing and gazing with their usual aspect of royalty and fearlessness, was a splendid troop of sable antelopes—about thirty cows, and the old bull which we had previously viewed! Nothing on the Veldt looks so truly regal and imposing as a troop of these antelopes. The shine on their coats, the flash of their dusty horns, and the noble carriage of their heads, all tend to give them an air of beauty greater than that of any wild creature I have ever seen. Here they were, for the first time, within easy shot, and accompanied by an old warrior whose trophy was well worth winning. Whether so grand and sudden a discovery gave me a temporary relapse into buck fever, and so disturbed my aim, I know not; but the old bull at whom I fired merely took two or three steps forward and then halted again, while the troop of cows began to string out and move slowly away. In a moment I got another cartridge in, and let drive again at the bull as he commenced to move. There was no doubt about my second shot, for one of his hind legs instantly swung to one side and became useless. Van Staden and I now sat down on the rocks, and each selecting a cow, fired several shots. The Dutchman's second shot floored his beast; but she got up again, and made after the retreating herd with all speed. All this, though it takes some time to tell, was but the work of a few seconds, at the end of which we mounted our horses again and rode off in hot pursuit. The bull took a line by himself, showing that he was badly hit, and Pointer, the old dog who had accompanied us, took up his spoor, and galloped along ahead of me, whilst Van Staden followed the cows on the right for some distance. By and by Pointer ran clean away from me, and disappeared in the tall trees ahead, where I presently heard him baying with all his might—a sure sign that he had brought the beast to a standstill. On passing into a beautiful glade, a sight presented itself that no sportsman could fail to appreciate. There stood the grand old fellow, with his glossy hide and splendid horns, looking the picture of defiance. He was standing with his back to a tree and anon slashing to right and left with his scimitar-like horns as the old dog came near him. On seeing me he immediately lay down—as, I have noticed, a sable generally does when wounded and capable of defending himself—so as to secure a complete sweep of his horns along the back, and render all approaches dangerous. The grass here was very high, and I could only


Waterbuck Ram
taking Cover
J G Millais
Nuanetsi River

A WATERBUCK TAKING COVER

see Pointer's head bobbing up as he approached to try and take hold of the buck; and being an old dog, nearly deaf, and having never before seen a big wounded animal, the smell of blood had evidently excited him. He was far too plucky to be of any use. Encouraged by my presence—for I had now got off my horse and was within twenty yards of the two animals—he made a rush in, for which piece of intrepidity the sable sent him flying with a blow from what appeared to be the flat of one of his horns. I was waiting to get a clear shot at the buck's neck, when I saw a vision of the dog on the sable's back and fired at once, hoping to save my canine friend's life. But alas! the rapidity of that horn-thrust had been just a second too quick. The movements of the two animals were so rapid that at the moment of my firing I could not see precisely what had happened, though Van Staden, who was behind me, saw the whole thing. What had occurred was this: both animals rolled over together, and by the cruellest of bad luck the sable had pierced the dog's shoulder with his horns, and thrown him forward past the line of his neck at the very second I had pulled. My bullet therefore passed through the dog's head into the sable's neck, killing both the animals instantaneously. I need hardly say I was bitterly disappointed at losing my one and only dog, and was disposed at first to blame myself for firing too quickly; but it was clearly one of those extraordinary accidents against which not even the most careful sportsman can guard himself. The only consolation I could think of was that the poor dog had been terribly wounded by the horns of the buck, and as he was far too plucky and impetuous to ever become a good "baying dog," his next encounter with a wounded sable would probably have cost him his life.[1]

The waggons coming up, we put my prize up bodily, intending to take him on to the river, a short way, before cutting him up. He was a perfectly adult male, the horns, though thick and strong, with a fine backward sweep, measuring 36 inches—the size of the average adult.

A temporary delay being caused by Tace, the old man and myself followed the retreating herd. Two animals were unfortunately hard hit, and though we did our best to come up with them, we never saw them again. This losing of wounded animals is one of the saddest incidents of hunting in heavy bush country, and unhappily one of common occurrence, as all the big antelopes are hard to kill, and will carry off wounds that would bring deer to a standstill at once. So, after an hour's search, we gave it up, being obliged to return to the waggons, and continue our journey to the Nuanetsi.

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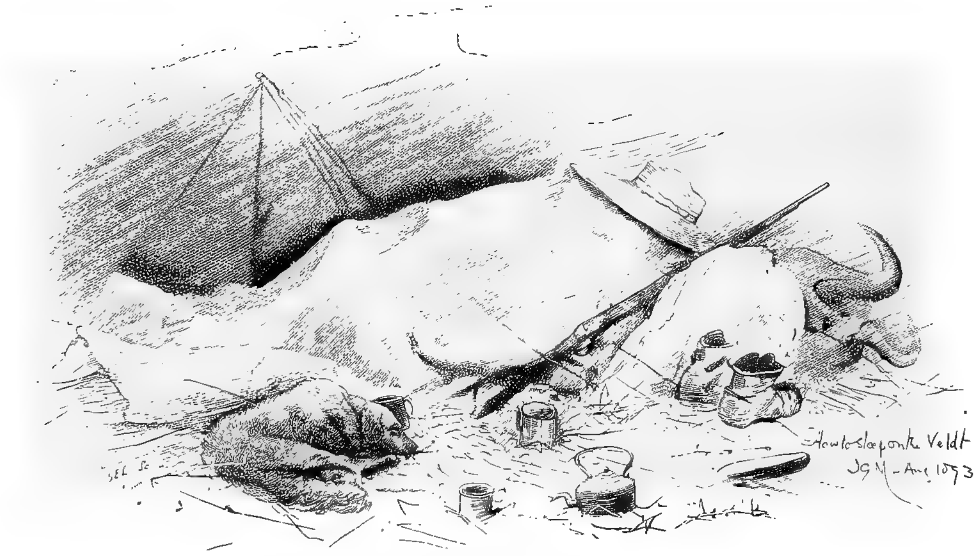
[1] Any one who wishes to know what a sable can do with his horns will do well to turn to the end of chap. ix. of Mr. Selous's last work. He will read there how, out of a pack of strong dogs loosed after a wounded bull, four were killed outright, and four more badly wounded.

Another two hours and we were within sight of this beautiful stream, but had great difficulty in getting our waggons over some of the deep and dangerous sluits that run parallel to all the Mashonaland rivers. Evening closed in at last, and our merry party sat round the blazing fire, enjoying sable and koodoo marrow-bones and arranging buffalo hunts for the morrow, with a lively hope of getting well among the game during the next three weeks. Not the least pleasurable omen was the subdued moans of a troop of lions away down the river as soon as the sun had set. Such a sound as this I had never heard before, and I felt, as I turned in, that here at last were the happy hunting-grounds that I had so often longed to enter.


How to sleep on the Veldt
JGM - Aug 1893

HOW TO SLEEP ON THE VELDT

CHAPTER VII

Beautiful Nuanetsi ! How shall I do thee justice in pages of cold print ? how convey to those who know them not the manifold charms that await all who seek thee as lovers of the wild and free ? A thousand and one little incidents crowd back on the brain as one seems to pass again from these dull shores to the blaze of sunlight that floods your silver streams, bringing forth at the same time the welcome shadow of your trees. The chatter of the honey guide, the bark of the baboons playing in the sand, and the drowsy monotone of the "Brom Vogel" strike the ear once more, whilst the peerless expanse of the heavens is dotted with an ever-moving series of vultures, eagles, and storks. Here, too, are the crowds of cinereous vultures, like black and gaunt spectres, assembling on the tops of the trees that flank the high banks of the crystal stream, and the river itself creeping, creeping ever onward through its bed of sand, where the footprints of the buffaloes, waterbuck, and lions that drank there last night mark the path of the great game. The whirl of our busy lives ceases for a moment, lost in the pleasant past, as one recalls that which was yesterday a reality, to-day but a dream. Hard as we sometimes thought our lot of self-imposed labour, wearisome those infernal sketches in the shade of the waggon, long those futile tramps ; all alike fade into insignificance by comparison with memories of glorious triumph, and the contemplation of Nature's grandest handiwork.

After the hunter has crossed the Bubye he gets to the real home of the now much persecuted game, and feels that every step he takes onward is well into the wilds where Nature has all her own way, unmarred by the hand of man. What was written yesterday, however, will not do for to-day ; the voracious hunter turns up where he is least expected, and two or three years hence there may be but little game along these beautiful and now solitary streams.

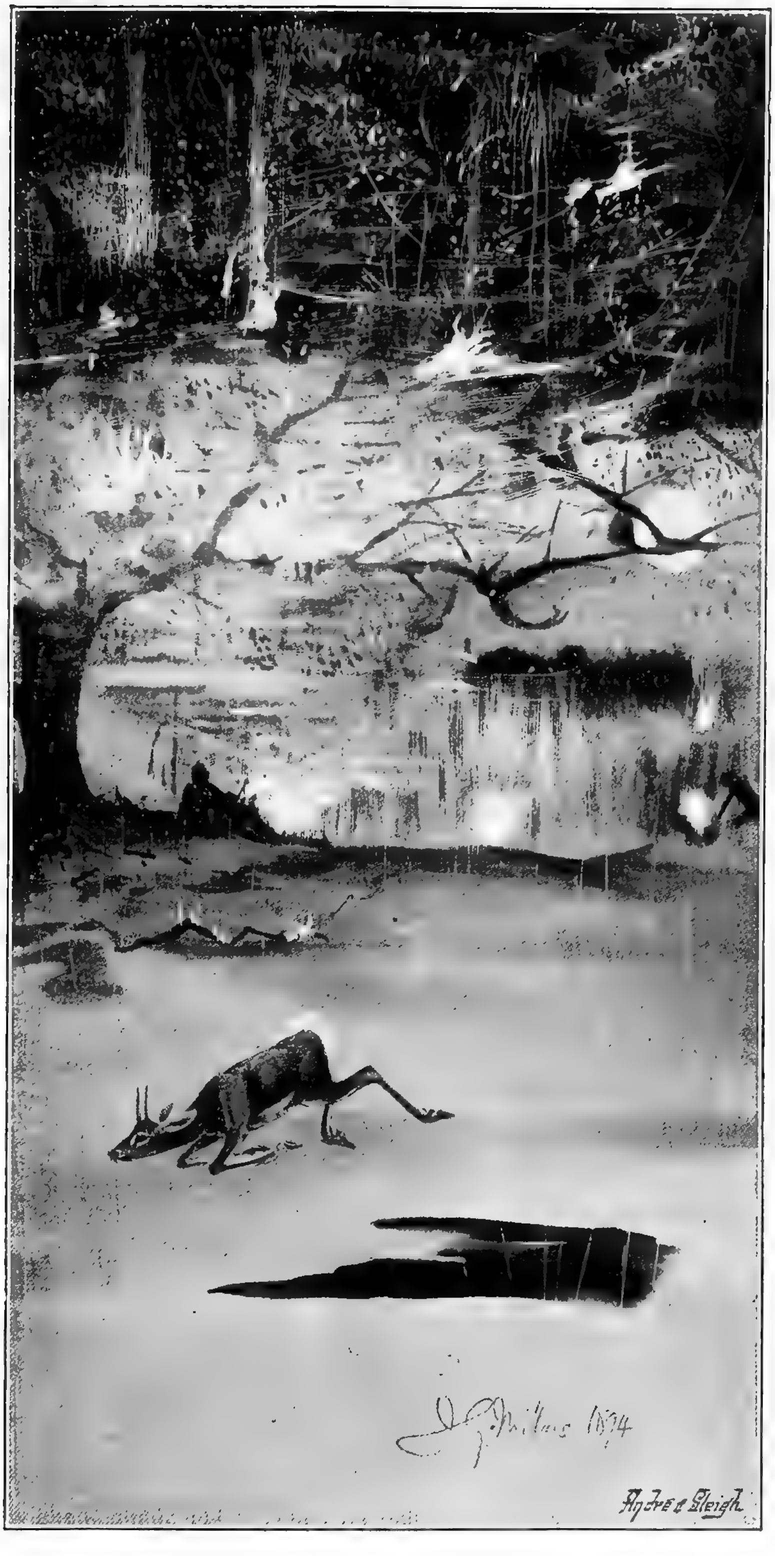
The Nuanetsi, known recently as one of the greatest game rivers of South

Africa, is still well worth a visit. Judging by the spoor of the game which frequent it in the summer, the place must be then swarming with animals of every description ; but at the time of my visit all the mud-wallows were more or less dried up, looking somewhat like huge cattle-pens that had long ago been deserted. Even to-day small herds of elephants and a few giraffes come up from the virgin "fly" country to the south-east ; where (I think I am correct in saying) few, if any, white hunters have as yet penetrated.

All along the river banks are to be seen the tracks of these great beasts, with their huge imprints in the mud. Here and there the tops of the roibosjes have all been eaten off, and lines of bushes and small trees are trampled down. In the dried mud-holes are the summer wallows of the wart-hogs, showing that at this season they assemble in numbers and form bathing parties ; and in all the open spaces are innumerable tracks of the great herds of buffalo that abide by this river summer and winter unless much shot at, when they trek farther into the "fly" and disappear for a time. Here also are many pallah and waterbuck, whilst roan antelope and sable are found in scattered troops on the north-east bank towards M'Pape's Mountain.

At our standing camp on the river on 21st June I came across a little rufous warbler (about the size and shape of our European great reed warbler) that has the most remarkably human whistle I ever heard. It is exactly like the noise emitted by a schoolboy ambling to school under a reduced rate of speed. We all know that boy, as he goes along with his hands in his pockets, his books under his arm, whistling away without any regard to either time or tune,—perfectly happy too, for his pockets are full of provender, and that he has not prepared a word of his lessons does not concern him in the least. Everywhere in the bush by the river, before the sun's heat becomes oppressive, you hear the notes of this strange bird, and its callous indifference to time and melody is very striking. It sounds as if the songster, trying to imitate some finer vocalist of the thrush tribe, had got hopelessly at sea.

And here, turning to my Diary, I find a note of another sort that I can hardly pass over without a word. Pompoom, my little boy, is slowly breaking my heart, as well as making fearful inroads on the royal wardrobe. He is really the most dreadful boy I ever saw for tearing his clothes to pieces ; but he has such a pleasant face and such comic ways of explaining matters that one cannot feel angry with him. He reminds me strongly of Bret Harte's "Melons"—that masterpiece of boy character. His clothing is a source of continual vexation to himself and to me, for it is no easy matter to keep his


J G Millais 1894
André & Sleigh

NATIVES FIRING THE BUSH AT NIGHT

small and dirty person properly covered. This morning he came and appealed to me so piteously for another suit—to advance his social status in the eyes of the two Shangans, Office and Gentleman—that I was obliged to comply, though this is the second old suit I have given him since leaving Pietersberg. "De Doorns, ow baas" (The thorns, old master) : that is the burden of his excuses, however varied in details.

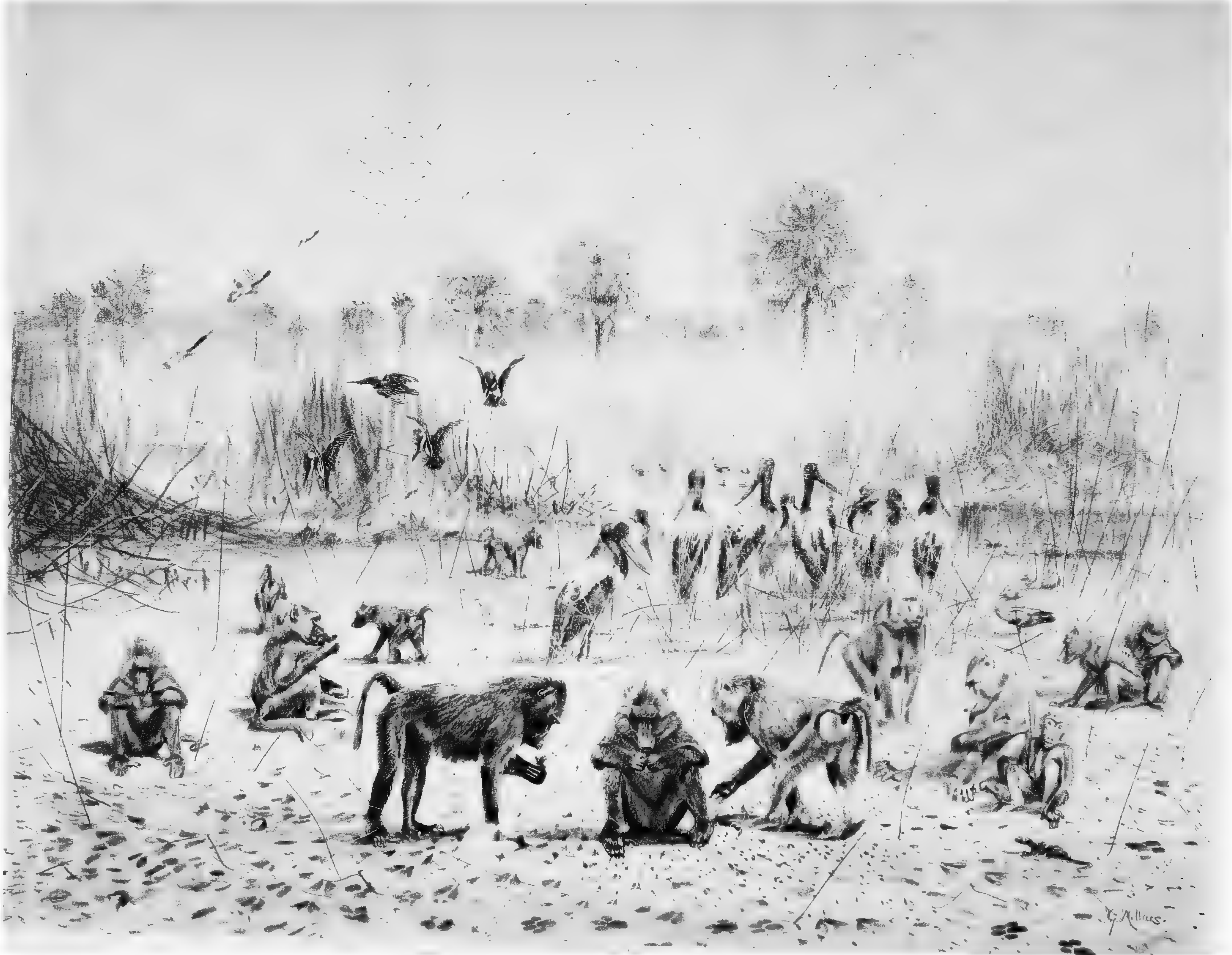
Our camp here is in a lovely spot on a high bluff under great trees, which fringe the banks of the river. Immediately below, on either side of the great sandy bed, are dense thickets of bamboo-like reeds which extend for miles, and shelter the lions and leopards during the day. In the middle of the sand-bed runs a small rill of beautifully clear water, about 2 feet deep and full of little yellow fish, while up and down its course are constantly moving many beautiful birds, amongst which the small black-and-white kingfisher is very common. Here also are a big flock of saddle-backed Jabiru storks (*Mycteria senegalensis*) and some grey ones whose name I don't know, small brown egrets, spur-winged plovers, and the usual herds of Egyptian geese. Bateleurs, too, are very common and very tame, and the magnificent white-headed screaming eagle is seen every day. I saw also to-day a green-shank precisely similar to our English bird of that name.

But perhaps the most interesting thing here in the way of bird life is the vultures' bathing-pool—a hole of dirty water about fifteen yards long and ten wide. It is situated in the sand-bed just below our camp, and here every morning come immense numbers of great black cinereous vultures, along with a white-headed brown one, to bathe—a circumstance that must be placed to the credit of the tribe as against the foul work in which they are commonly engaged. The vultures assemble soon after sunrise, and occupy in companies all the upper branches of the great trees round the camp. There they remain motionless for a considerable time, till, finding the coast clear, one or two of the more daring spirits venture down to the pool, their eyes timidly directed towards the bank on either side. These are soon followed by others. It is really a most comic sight to see a vulture bathing. Slowly and cautiously he walks into the water up to his thighs, and then stands looking about for a long time ; then one wing is lowered and dipped ever so gingerly into the pool, then another pause for a minute or more, during which he gravely contemplates the result, and this being found satisfactory, the other wing is slowly subjected to a similar immersion, and he gradually sits down as sedately as a judge about to pronounce sentence of death. Every movement is taken with a self-conscious dignity that is supremely laughable in such an ignoble-looking fowl.

Two years previously to my visit hardly a hunter had penetrated down the Nuanetsi, and even now only a bit of the upper portion is known. This is of course on account of the much-dreaded tsetse fly, but now the fly seems to have shifted from a central strip of the river right over to within a day's reach of the Lundi; and here Van Staden, his cousin Cos, the Basadanotes, Fenter, and Randsberg have hunted for the past two seasons. We are now (22nd June) about as near as we dare go to this pest, being within a day's ride of it, and have spent the day in looking for the big troop of buffalo that are doubtless still here, as we have found where they drank two nights ago.

Returning this evening along the eastern bank of the river, I saw a lot of Jabiru storks alighting; and, creeping up the bank well out of sight of the birds, I saw, through a cut running down to the river, a big old male baboon proceeding leisurely along amongst the trees in front of me and presently descending to the water. Then, creeping cautiously on, I got a good view of him, and on parting the grass in front of my face, I saw below me as pretty an African scene as one could wish to come across. In the immediate foreground, not fifty yards away, was a troop of about thirty baboons, whilst beyond them—at the water's edge—were about a hundred Jabirus and other storks standing in a long line in most picturesque and graceful attitudes. The setting sun sent a reed of gold along the backs of both birds and beasts, while the surrounding scenery shone forth with hues of gorgeous and ever-changing colour. I had at least ten minutes of this fascinating scene all to myself, till Van Staden, coming up through the trees behind, put both birds and animals to flight.

Baboons are absurdly human in all their little ways, as one notices more particularly when compared with small bushmen. Here we see the sulky or bad-tempered old man, who gets cross, chattering and showing his teeth when any of the others come too near him; there two or three boys engaged in a game of romps; there the attentive mother relieving one of her children from the small and painful adjuncts of forest life, whilst the majority are walking slowly along with their heads down, searching for some beetle or insect that they frequently stop to devour. On the hills they are constantly on the watch; so unless one comes upon them at a favourable moment like the present, the naturalist would seldom have an opportunity of seeing them without being detected himself. The sight of the baboon is marvellously



River scene on the Nuanetsi

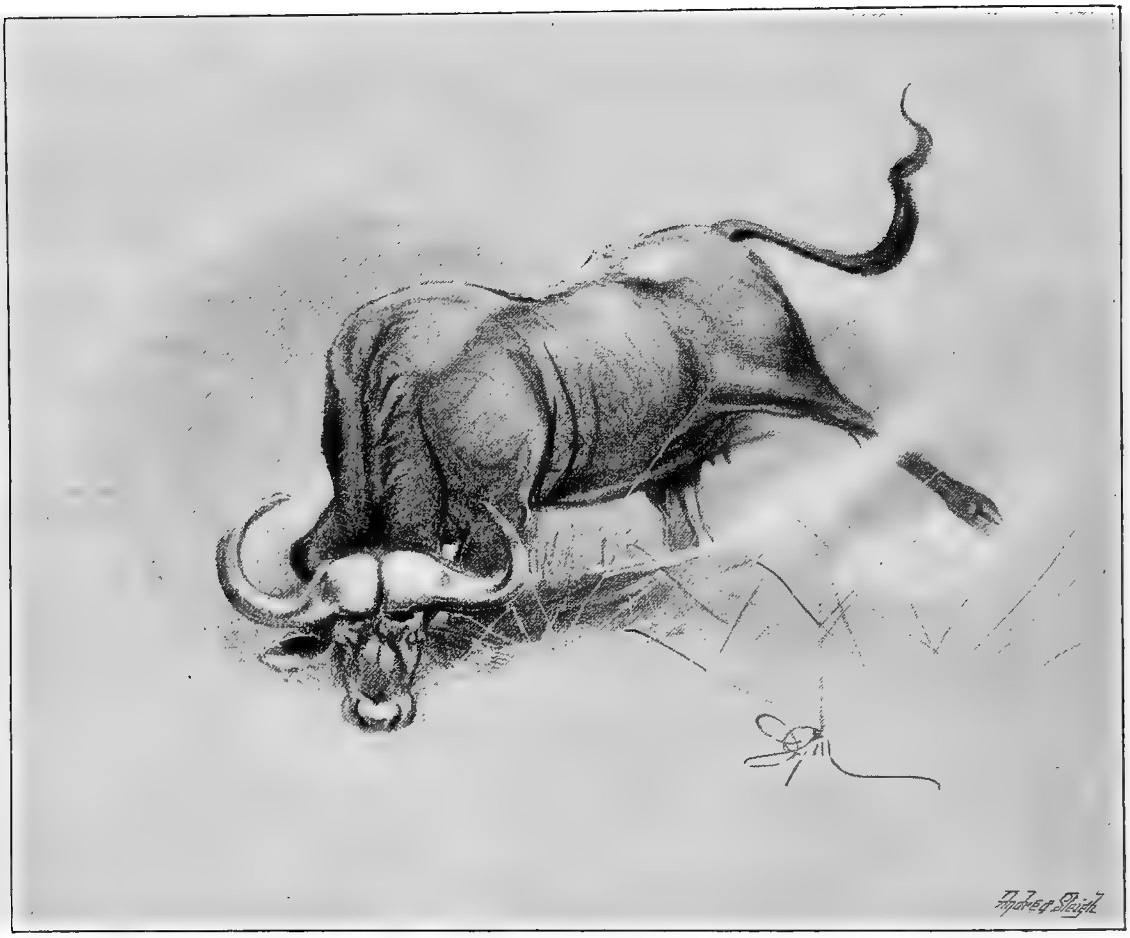
Baboons searching for insects & Saddle backed Storks playing in the Sky

keen, and he will take alarm at the presence of man at a greater distance than any other animal.

22nd June.—This has been a red-letter day with us, though it hardly promised as much at the start. During the morning we saw a fine roi-kat (the red lynx or caracal), but only for a moment. It seemed to be very shy, and its movements (so far as I could judge) more dog-like and less shrinking than those of any other cat except the cheetah. About mid-day we encountered two small troops of Burchell's zebra and some pallah, all of which seem fairly tame ; but though I wanted a couple of these zebra skins, it was thought best not to fire, for fear of moving something better.

Rather late in the afternoon we began working through some thicker bush, and the presence of the Malala palms showed us that we were again approaching the river, when Van Staden, riding in front of me, slipped off his horse, whispering the magic word "Buffle," upon which I too dismounted. A couple of indistinct black forms could be detected moving slowly away from us, and the constant swishing of tails and occasional grunts proceeding from their direction told me that the old man had spotted the "Groot Vilde" at last. Seeing that the troop, whose size we could only guess, was moving away from us, we crept forward as noiselessly as possible, and soon found ourselves within about seventy yards of a fine buffalo. I was going to fire at it, thinking it was a bull—for to a man who sees the Cape buffalo for the first time, cows, finely horned as this was, look very like bulls—when the old man stopped me, pointing out my mistake ; and round and round we went for a minute or two, hoping to see a good bull. Suddenly a loud grunting snort was heard, and in front of us we saw several buffaloes move together and disappear. There was not a moment to be lost. I could not for the life of me see the shoulder of a cow that Van Staden said was standing looking at us a bit to our left. The beast, he said, was just going, so I whispered to him to take the shot himself, which he did forthwith with excellent effect. Instantly the bush in front of us showed itself alive with animals madly struggling to escape. A troop of about thirty-five started off at full speed, crashing through the thorns and undergrowth like paper, and sending up a cloud of brown dust in their wake that almost hid their black hides ; but over all the row was a sound that cheered the hunter's soul—the loud and resonant death-bellow of the buffalo that had fallen and was struggling to regain her feet. I then gave her a shot, which was in reality unnecessary ; and, seeing that she was done for, we tore back to the horses, and jumping up, made such haste as the thorns would allow in pursuit of the retreating herd, keeping well in view the brown pillar of dust that followed in their wake.

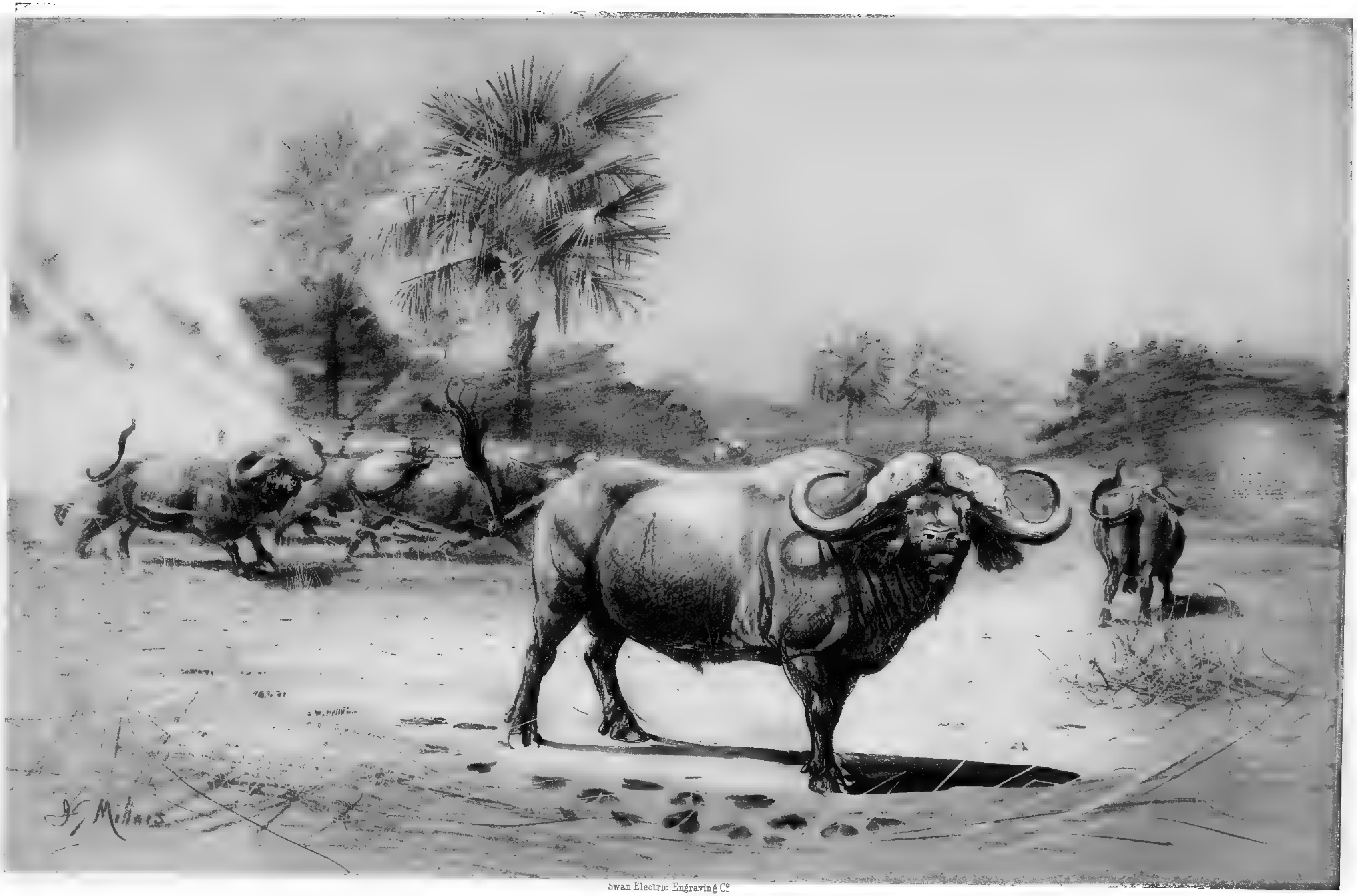
Now, hunting through thick wait-a-bit bush at a walking pace, and galloping through it after a frightened herd of buffaloes, are two very different things, as will presently appear. We had hardly got well started on our wild career before Oom Roelef came to grief in much the same way as Absalom did upon a notable occasion, a drooping sprig of wait-a-bit having caught him fairly by the head, and nearly dragged him from his horse. The lobe of his right ear was torn open and his face was covered with blood, which, coupled with his great eyes and long hair, made the old boy look pretty wild. By and by my homespun coat and I begun to part company in small detachments, and I began to fear we should never get a chance at our game unless the country before us was very different from that we were now passing through; for,



A BUFFALO COW FALLING

apart from the drawback of the thorns, the trees here stand so close together that your horse, unless perfectly trained to the pressure of either hand or leg, is apt to scrape you against them, or to fall into holes suddenly seen only by the rider. A run of about half a mile, however, improved matters considerably, for the wait-a-bits gave place to a great extent to roibosjes, and we made such good time that the rolling black buffaloes began to show up now and again between the stems of the trees, thus giving us fresh hope at every stride. They seemed to be galloping slowly ahead of us, keeping (as they generally do) close together, their heads well up and their tails constantly lashing against their flanks. The trees had now thinned away a bit ; but what we gained in this way we lost in another, for the ground suddenly changed its character, showing only alternate stone flats and sandy ridges full of jackal burrows, till (after about two miles of this furious scramble) a broad glade in the forest enabled us to improve our pace, and presently we found ourselves within 100 yards of the herd. As we approached them I saw, to my joy, a great bull rolling along on the left a little apart from, though fairly level with the others, as though taking a line of his own. The troop, though apparently tired and going slowly away, were making really good pace, and I was much astonished at the agility they displayed on suddenly changing their minds as to which side of some bushes they would go. They threw up their tails, lowered their heads, and spun round on their toes in a second, showing that they were still full of running. A forced rush in within fifty yards brought us up to shooting distance, and the old man and I jumped off and came into action. I was a bit hot and excited after the long run, and my two shots unfortunately failed, passing just over my beast's back, whilst a shot by Oom Roelef undoubtedly hit a cow. On again we went and continued the hunt for another mile or so, when, after narrowly escaping a spill from a bough striking me in the chest, we found some more good ground. And now, though our horses were somewhat blown, I determined to get closer up, for if you jump off at fifty yards' distance, by the time your rifle is fired the beast is a good 100 yards away, and perhaps in an unfavourable position. Van Staden was confining his attention to the cows on his right, while the big bull that I was pressing lumbered along quietly to the left. At last I got within about thirty yards of him, and jumping off, let him have it in his stern—unfortunately the only part presented to me. He immediately sprang round, ran a short distance and then stopped, when I at once gave him two more, Van Staden adding another from the right. Seeing that he was done for, and that the herd turned off towards the river again, we once more mounted our nags and followed them, in the hope of getting another cow. After a mile and a half the bush became worse than before, both above and below; our horses too were played out; whilst the buffaloes seemed to have woke up after the last shooting, and to be as fresh as ever. Going slowly over a network of holes, my horse put his foot in one and sent me flying into a wait-a-bit—luckily too young to do more than break my fall. The shaking, however, deprived my horse of what little wind he had left, and Van Staden's being equally done, we decided to abandon the chase. And now dismounting we compared notes on (among other things) each other's appearance, for we had both undergone such changes since the commencement of the hunt that I doubt whether two sorrier or more disreputable-looking villains could have been found in Africa at that moment. Van Staden looked as if he had been in a prize fight. Our clothes, thickly covered with dust, were reduced to mere rags and tatters, and as to ourselves, I think we could have given points to Job, in a competition for prize sores, so cruelly had those horrid thorns treated us. Buffalo-hunting is certainly grand sport, but a suit of corduroys is almost as necessary to its enjoyment as a good horse sound in wind and limb.

We smoked our pipes, rearranged our ruffled plumage, and congratulated ourselves on the events of the day; and then the question was which of the dead beasts we should go to first—a point we must settle at once, as sunset was coming rapidly on. For myself, I had not the foggiest notion as to where we were; for though the presence of certain trees showed that we were near the river, the camp might be either up or down stream for aught I knew. Climbing a tree, however, the old man discovered that we had been riding in a semicircle from the point where the first shot was fired; so we went for the cow, and found it, aided by the vultures that had already gathered round its carcase. Here a fine troop of Burchell's zebra, trotting up slowly from the river, passed within sixty yards of us, and being anxious for a specimen, I fired at the leader, an old mare, who fell to the shot at once, but recovered and ran up towards the dead buffalo. A second shot, however, hit her in the right place, and she dropped stone dead. Van Staden and I had our work cut out now for the rest of the evening. He grallocked the buffalo cow and cut down branches of thorns to bush it up, and I skinned the zebra close by, keenly watched by a host of vultures, who planted themselves on the trees around in expectation of a feast, helping to form a scene at once picturesque and typical of veldt life. In about an hour our work was finished, and having packed on

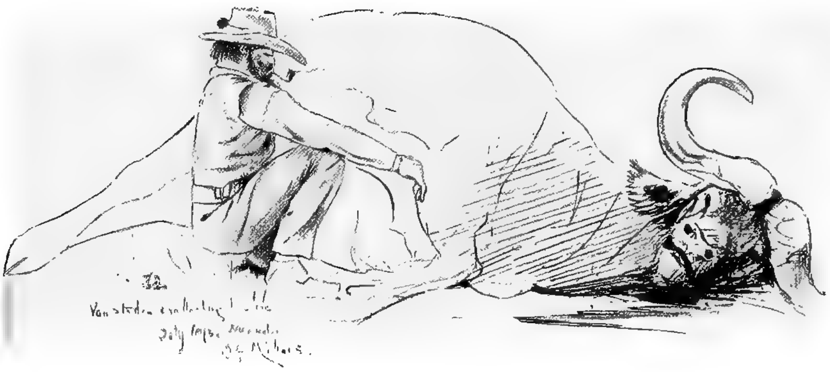


Swan Electric Engraving C^o.

A wounded Cape Buffalo Bull

our horses the buffalo's marrow-bones and tit-bits, and the zebra skin, we led them away—to find, to our astonishment, on emerging from the bush, that we were within 600 yards of our own camp. This was a great stroke of luck, and we utilised it by inspanning a few oxen and sending off a waggon to fetch the buffalo cow in bodily.

It was a jolly party that sat round the camp fire that night—buffalo marrow-bones are food for the gods. We fell upon them with appetites worthy of a Guildhall banquet, and our enjoyment was enhanced by the belief that this small troop we had found meant a big herd not far away. Tace and Piet had killed two waterbucks, and Hert and Petrus were away back to Gong. As soon as the sun set we heard lions down the river, and at night a lion came close around our cattle kraal, as we knew by his frequent moans.



VAN STADEN GRALLOCKING

The Boer hunters generally sit in this attitude when engaged in an occupation of this sort.

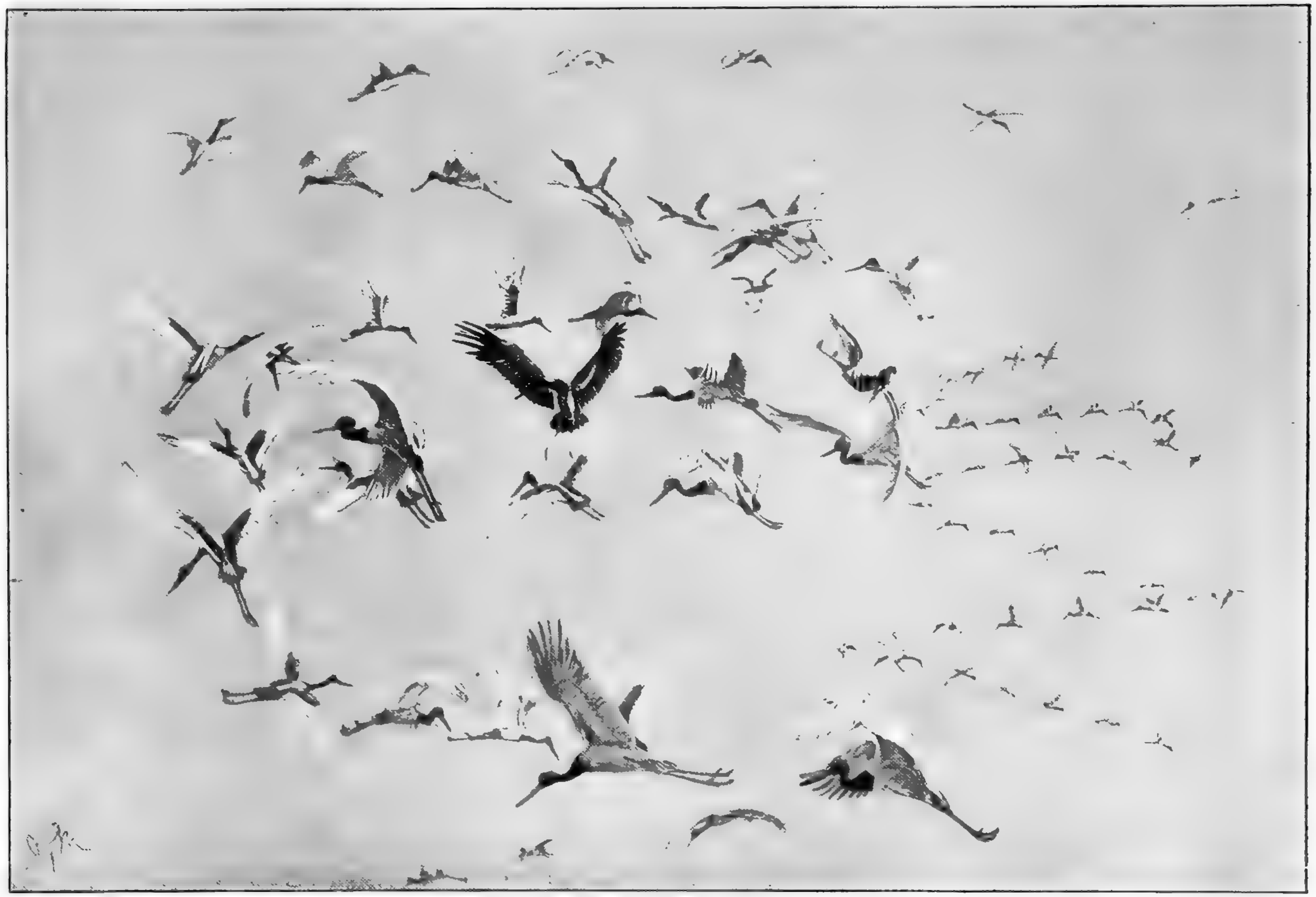
The old man and I were a bit late in starting next morning for the buffalo bull. After a long ride, we found to our mortification and disgust, only the marks of a "sleigh pat" (sledge path) where we had left the dead beast. There is an unwrittten Dutch law, and a very just and fair one, that whoever finds a beast dead on the Veldt, ungrallocked, can claim it; and availing himself of this, a Dutch hunter named Fenter, who had arrived before us, carried off the carcase we had expected to find. The skin was somewhat of a loss, but the hunter was good enough to give me the head, which was all I wanted, fearing lest I should not be so fortunate as to kill another. This little contretemps, however, did not bother us, as my hunter expected to get what buffaloes we required in the next fortnight; and if they were not obtained at Nuanetsi, we felt sure of meeting with them on the Lundi.

We got nothing that day, nor the next one, but on returning to camp the smell of a dead animal attracted our attention, and following our noses, we came presently upon the body of a magnificent waterbuck ram lying beneath a spreading malala. The poor beast had evidently been wounded in the shoulder by a native "paving-stone" bullet, and had wandered about some time before it had succumbed, for it was simply all skin and bone. Its horns, however, both in size and shape, were as fine as any I have ever seen; so, though I do not as a rule keep any heads in my collection that I have not shot myself, this being exceptionally valuable I determined to bring it home. And a very nasty job it was to get it off—a whole hour's work on an animal that had been dead about a week. The head measures 33¾ inches along the horn.

25*th June*.—Trekked five miles down the river, as there was a suspicion of "fly" higher up; and while we were away that young monkey Pompoom must needs try to make a cooking fire amongst the big grass by the waggon, the result of which was that he set the camp in a blaze. Luckily, Prince and Teenie (who never hunt) were on the spot, and managed to save the waggons. As it was, my saddle, bridle, and several smaller things, with some skins, were burnt. The grass is so dry and inflammable at this season that the whole forest can be set alight with a match when a slight breeze is blowing. Lions heard last night again. During the day they hide in dense river thickets, and a big pack of curs would be the only thing to hunt them out.

The following week was almost a blank so far as I was concerned, for the beasts we met with were not what I wanted. I got a waterbuck, however, and another very fine old wart-hog that was as tame as a farmyard pig, and Van Staden captured several waterbuck ewes and a pallah. I also had a fair chance of a splendid sable bull, and had little excuse for missing it.

One day we saw the Basadanotes again. They were leaving the Nuanetsi and going back to the Transvaal, and we learned from them that Cos Van Staden (Oom Roelef's cousin) had got first run-in at the big herd of buffaloes on the other side of the river, and killed nine one afternoon. His nephew, who was with them, presented a most wild and pitiable appearance, having about ten days ago narrowly escaped with his life. He had been hunting with his uncle, and one day being out alone, he lost his way to camp—a common occurrence even with experienced hunters. For nearly a week he wandered about, half dead with thirst, till at last he struck the river again, and so found his way to the young Basadanotes' camp. The unfortunate young man had subsisted almost entirely on locusts and wild honey, which he obtained by



DRIFTING SPIRALS. JABIRU STORKS SOARING

following the honey guides ; he had shot a pallah, but had taken only a little of the meat, as he hoped to get on an old waggon spoor again. After sleeping up in trees, where he was half frozen—to avoid the lions at night—and trudging wearily about in the sweltering heat of the sun, burdened with unpleasant thoughts, no wonder that even in this short period the young fellow, doubtless a hardy enough specimen of his race, was completely broken-down and cowed, as he looked to-day.

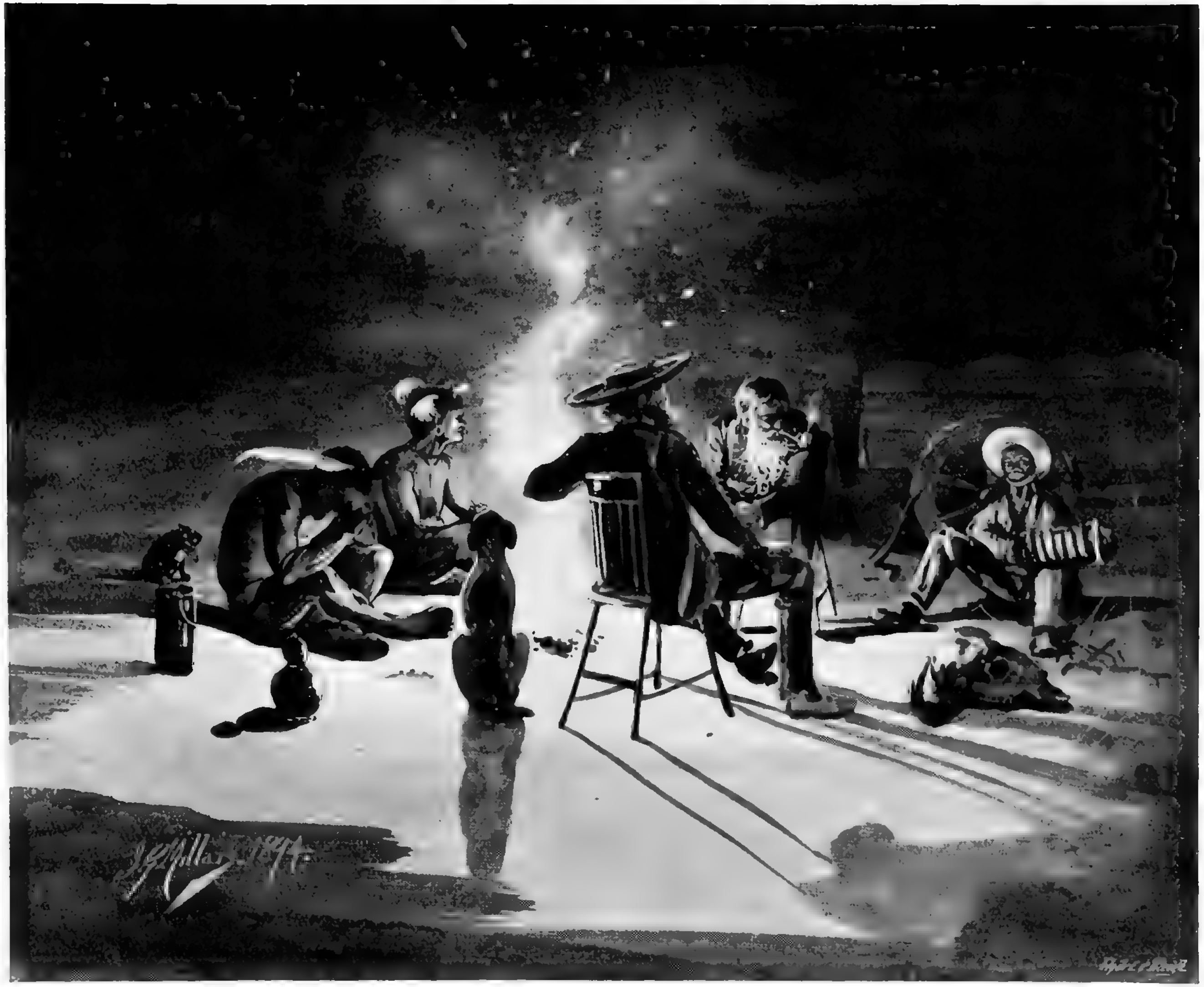
After a week at the second camp on the Nuanetsi the old man, who had at odd times been knocking up a tiny apology for a waggon, made of tree poles and wheels taken from his own small buck-waggon, said he was now ready to start into the "fly" and go and look for the white rhinoceros. The donkeys, twelve in number, were all in excellent health, and I decided to take Prince and Office with me. We accordingly devoted an afternoon to putting together such stores as were necessary for a six weeks' cruise, and to patching up a rotten set of old riem harness which had been kindly given to me by the storekeeper from whom I had purchased the mokes. At this class of work both Teenie and the old man were experts, and all was ready next morning for our new journey. The evening before our departure I witnessed a very beautiful sight just as I returned to camp from hunting, and was cooking my dinner. The whole of the Jabiru storks in the place had mounted high in the air above the river, and were soaring like eagles, drifting slowly down wind in three huge spirals, each of which at the moment was composed of thirty or forty birds. As this is a feature in aerial volitation that can be better grasped by means of a sketch, I have done my best to give a correct representation of the scene. The effect of the sun on the snowy backs and wings of the birds was very beautiful, whilst the constantly-moving spirals, as each bird kept changing from one line to another, were quite charming to look upon. The wings were never beaten, but every bird in turn, with stationary pinions, commenced a spiral descent of each pillar and then passed on to the next, returning to the summit of the first cone on reaching the lowest position of the third one.

On Tuesday morning, 25th June, the old man and myself, Prince and Office, started again for the east, Tace, Piet, and Teenie coming with us as far as the river, to help in getting the little waggon across the sandy bed and up the bank on the other side, which was almost like the side of a house. They all said that if the donkeys could pull their load up that steep they could go anywhere ; and, with their help and ours, the donkeys did it ; but before many days were over we found, to our sorrow, that donkeys with a waggon in the thick bush are the most heart-breaking things in the wide wide world. If ever, dear reader, you contemplate a visit to the "fly," never go with a waggon and donkeys, or you will come back with grey hair and a chronic kink in the back from chopping down trees. Native porters (if you can get them) and donkeys with packs are ten times better. From the third day our troubles commenced, and I must say that for the next month I never had such a rough time in my life. Nobody knew for certain which way we were going, and with so many trees and other obstacles in our path, we never made more than six miles a day in the thick bush. Then we could not get water when we wanted it, and when we did, it was stinking and half mud. Game, too, was very scarce, and, to add to our distress, the old man got dysentery, and nearly died.

For two days we made our way quite happily down the east bank of the river; for, though sleeping on the hard ground in your kaross is a big change from your comfortable bed in the waggon, you get cunning by experience, and may even in time find out the soft side of a flint. You just cut a big hole where your thigh goes, fit yourself to it, and make your boy bring some grass for a bolster; and, save for the attentions of small visitors anxious to know how you taste, the situation is not half bad. At some short distance from the river, the old man showed me a steep bank that a troop of panic-stricken buffaloes had surmounted two years previously. The place was so steep and rocky that it would have taken a wiry, active man some time to get up; but, scared by some lions that had made a rush on a cow, the whole herd had managed to surmount it, assisted by the impetus they had gained in descending the near side bank. Of buffaloes, however, I shall say but little, my own experience being too limited; and much the same observation applies to the lion. I leave them with pleasure to other and abler pens, every writer on Africa delighting to let himself go on these interesting subjects.

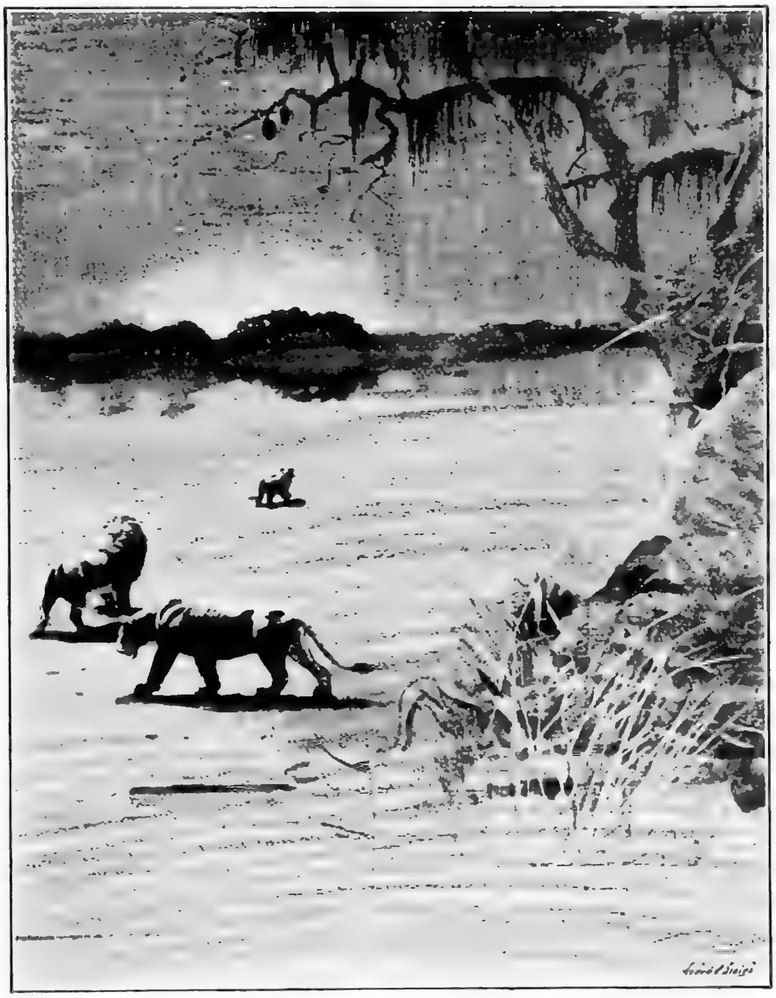
Van Staden, however, told me of a scene he witnessed some years ago—an attack by lions on an old buffalo bull—too interesting to be passed over. One day, when hunting near the Limpopo, he saw the dust rise near the river, and knowing that some big herd was on the move, he ran as hard as he could, hoping to get a shot. But he was too late. The retreating animals—doubtless a herd of buffalo—escaped, and while they were making off he heard sounds of bellowing and scuffling in the bush close by. He was soon on the scene of the tumult, for a buffalo makes a great noise when he is collared. And this is what he saw:—

A lion and a lioness were fixed on the two hind legs of a buffalo bull,


J G Millais 1894

LISTENING TO THE LIONS ROARING

another was tearing at its shoulder, whilst a fourth (either a young lion or a lioness) was endeavouring to fasten on the other fore-leg. Now, according to Oswell and Selous (to say nothing of other authorities), when he sees his way to do it, the lion's first aim is to break his victim's neck, or to kill by mass of wounds, tearing away at the flesh on whatever part of the beast he can easiest attack. Here, however (as proved by subsequent examination), the lions deliberately set themselves to hamstring the buffalo by biting through the great tendons of his legs and shoulder. Van Staden killed one of the lionesses and severely wounded the lion, and the buffalo being unable to rise, he despatched him also and examined the carcase carefully. He described the bites to me as being all concentrated on the various points of attack, where the lions having



"THE VOICE OF AFRICA"

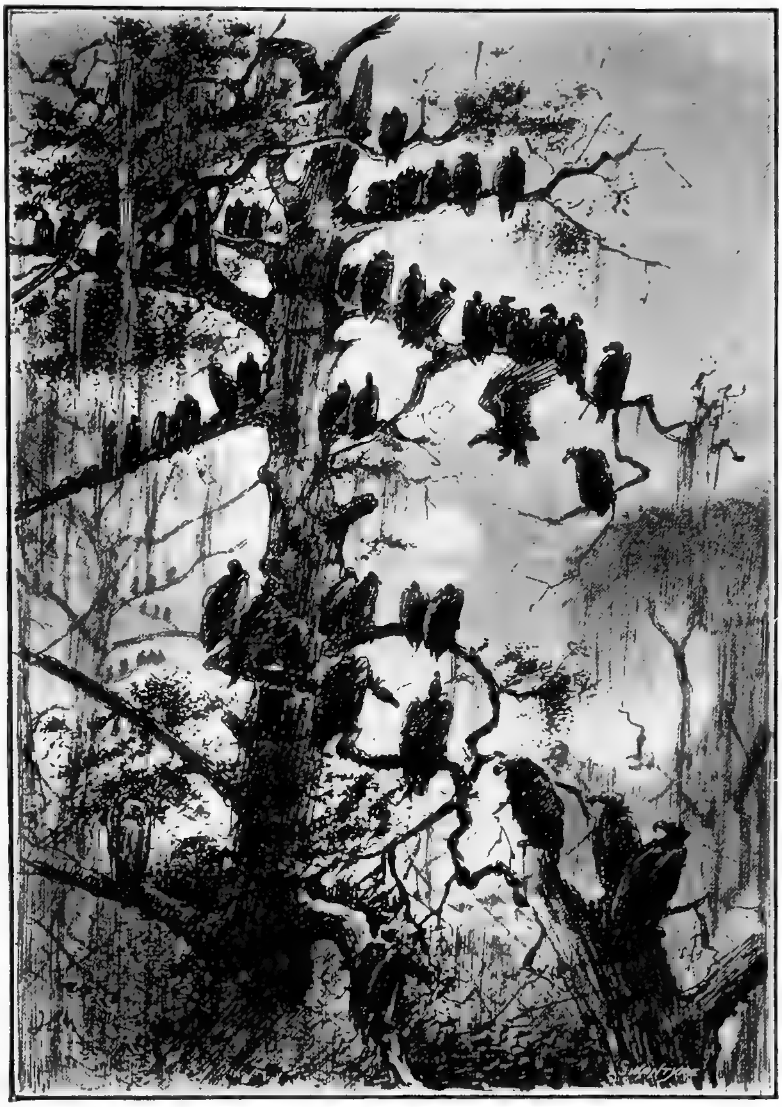
got a good hold, gnawed away till the animal was disabled; and as I always found my friend very accurate on all points, I have not the smallest doubt that these lions did literally and intentionally hamstring the buffalo.

On my first sight of the Cape buffalo I was much struck with the shortness of the animal's legs and his extraordinary activity in the use of them. The American bison is a stupid, clumsy brute at the best, but the Cape buffalo has not only a very fair share of cunning in his composition, but ample power to carry out his evil intentions when he means to be wicked.

On the afternoon of the third day we left the edge of the river and struck due east in the thick bush, hoping to reach the Lundi in three days and take our chance of finding natives to guide us. The arrangement was that Van Staden and I should walk on ahead within sight of Prince, who drove the donkeys and followed our line, so giving us a chance of shooting game. And now many difficulties cropped up. About every half hour the waggon would get locked on a tree, and as it was impossible to back it, we had to cut the tree down. It was heart-breaking and wearisome work, and at night we outspanned in the forest, thoroughly done up, and with no water for our donkeys.

Now a donkey, as most of us know, has great endurance, and can exhibit upon occasion a perseverance and a willingness beyond all praise; but, as a race, these animals are as various in temperament as any human beings. I can never think of them without recalling the little girl "who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead, and when she was good, she was very, very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid." In a team a bad moke is worse than useless, for he gives all the work to some good beast that would pull itself to death rather than be beaten, and in a bad country where you are always getting hung up, even a good donkey fastened to a waggon is almost as great a nuisance. When your fore-wheel catches the stem of a tree the good donkey, instead of stopping, as a lazy one would, begins to pull like mad, to the imminent danger of your waggon; and this entails no end of work on your part to avoid a smash, for, unlike oxen and horses, donkeys are not readily trained to stop at a word of command. We had eight donkeys in our team, the two best—"Mrs. Langtry" and "Gladstone," acting as leaders—and these with the two rear ones against the "disselboom" had to be rushed at, seized round the head and stopped compulsorily whenever a block occurred. This, we found, was the only way to make any progress. And so, toddling along, always on the alert for an accident, we managed to avoid any actual smash till the evening of the second day, when the whole turn-out nearly went to glory.

During the afternoon we had got in amongst a lot of those great dry sluits about 50 yards wide and 30 or 40 feet deep—nasty things to cross with a waggon at any time, and particularly so with donkeys. On entering the last and worst, all the waggon wheels being tied, the vehicle itself came to the conclusion that the donkeys were not going fast enough to the bottom, so it started off on its own account to see if it could help them a bit. This it managed so successfully that the whole concern—donkeys, waggon, and contents—went flying to the bottom of the sluit; and had it not been for the deep and soft sand in which they finally lodged, at least four of the donkeys



VULTURES GOING TO ROOST

must have been killed. As it was, two of them were buried in the sand underneath the fore part of the waggon, where we found them lying groaning on their sides, while two more were floored under the disselboom, and the rest wound up in the harness like a fly-fisher's cast in a tree. It was not a cheering spectacle, and I need hardly say we made all haste to extricate the unfortunate animals from their dangerous position. To throw the stores on one side and each seize and lift at a wheel was the work of a minute, but even then we found our united efforts only able to heave the cumbersome thing slightly. It was a good quarter of an hour before all the donkeys were extricated; and after that experience I think that proverb about the cat might well be applied to the patient and long-suffering creature which is always held up to ridicule.

Three hours elapsed before we were again on our way, for, strange to say, none of the team seemed much the worse for the accident. So on we went again till nightfall, in the hope of finding water or natives. And now we were fairly in a fix. The donkeys could never reach the Nuanetsi again without water, and we had only one kettleful for the four of us. The old man and I sat and discussed the situation. For ourselves we had no fear, as we were only about fifteen miles from the river and I had brought "Brenke," the Basuto pony, with me; but there seemed every prospect of having to abandon the donkeys, for they were done up. Finally we determined to struggle on after a night's rest towards the line of hills before us, beneath which we hoped to find water, if only the donkeys would last out so far.

We had just settled this when we heard the weird thump of a native tomtom echoing in the distance—the sweetest sound that could have greeted our ears at that moment. Leaving orders for Prince to inspan again, my companion and I hurried on in the direction of the sound, and soon came on a small mealie patch, near which were seated a Shangan and his two wives. Oom addressed him in Zulu, and, to our great joy, he took us to a water-hole close by, where we found refreshment of a sort for man and beast. And then, after some bargaining, the native, who seemed intelligent, said he would return on the morrow and take us to a big spruit half-way between the Nuanetsi and the Lundi, where we should find a trail to the river.

About midnight I was awakened by excited voices, and, seizing my rifle, out I tumbled in a hurry. One of the young donkey foals, straying away from the others, had galloped up to the fire closely pursued by some large animal—a big hyæna it seemed—and Oom was now sitting up, rifle in hand, with intent to slaughter. Presently a big grey body loomed up about ten yards away, and the old man fired while I hesitated, not being quite sure that it was not one of the donkeys that had got loose. Then there was a scramble in the dark, and the animal suddenly disappeared. We saw next morning where he had stood, but no sign of his having been touched.

The Shangan said all the natives who had been living at the M'Pape's Mountain near to the water had trekked away to the east beyond Sabi, as last autumn a big raiding party of Matabele had come up and killed about half of them, and run off with the women and all they could lay hands on.

Just as we were ready to start next morning our guide turned up, bringing with him five other natives, amongst whom was one "Chele," the finest savage I have ever seen. He was about 6 feet 3 inches in height, and perfectly proportioned, having moreover an exceedingly good-looking face of the old Roman type. If this were a novel for good little schoolgirls I might even go so far as to say, he was as handsome as a young Greek god—say one of the Greek gods whose type of beauty finds so much favour in certain feminine minds, and is so useful to the modern novelist in search of an ideal. If the latter were to describe any one type of manly beauty that he himself admired, the chances are he would only please a few, whereas if he falls back on the never-failing young Greek god, he is sure to be all right.

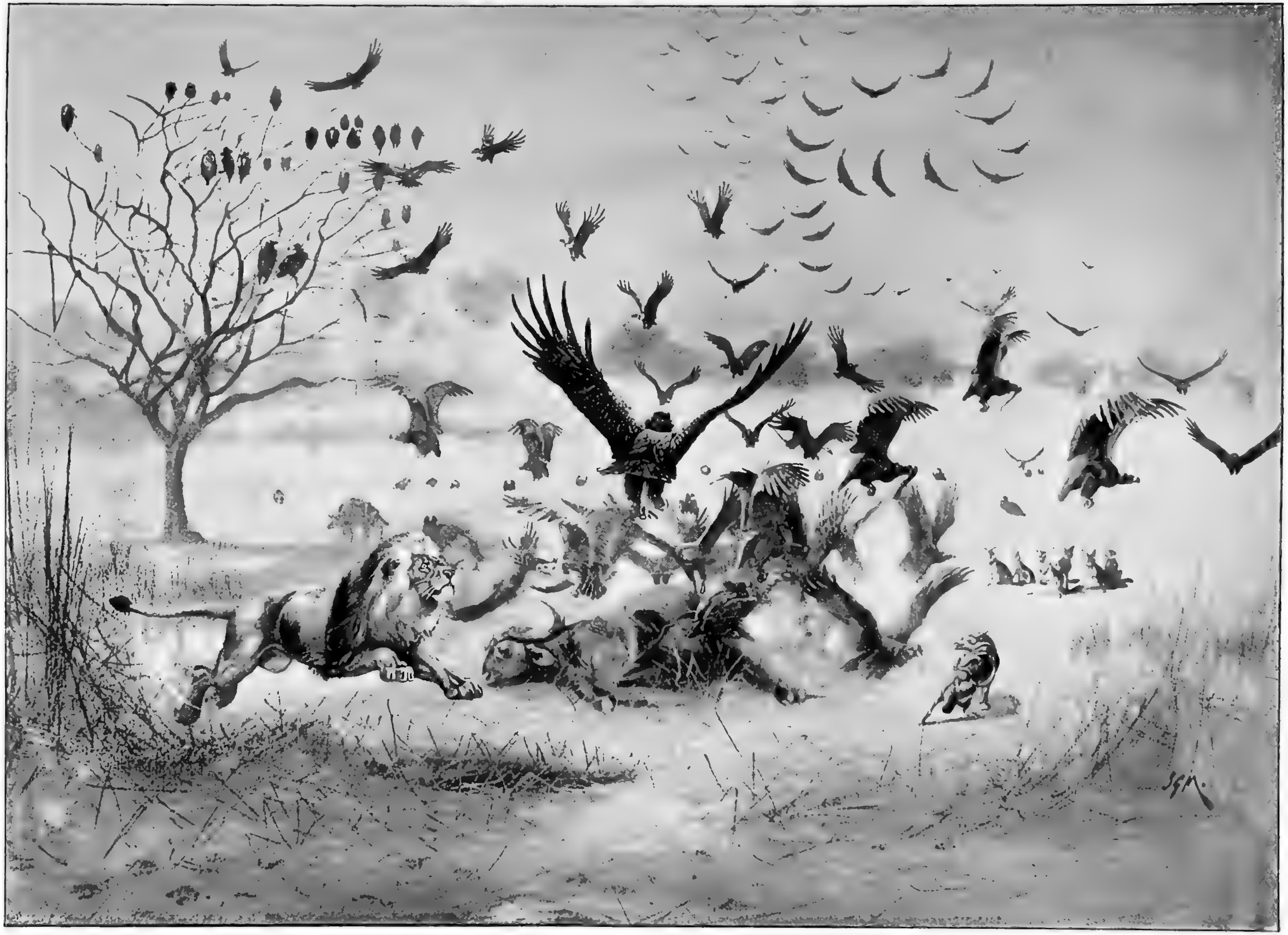
Anyhow Chele was as handsome as they make 'em nowadays; but (alas! that I should say it) he was a big liar, and generally drunk—from pombe when he could get it—or half mad by constantly smoking "daha," a narcotic preparation somewhat resembling opium. We saw a good deal of Chele after this, and though he was a beautiful panther-like creature to look at, we disliked him more and more every time he appeared.

Another of the natives had a most comical face, lighted up with a perennial smile of extreme good-nature and urbanity, while surmounting his noble physiognomy was a literal crown—a gem in its way—made out of a card of buttons. The cardboard, with the buttons outside (just as they had left some Birmingham shop) was neatly wrapt round his head and fastened at the back, forming about as comical a decoration as I ever saw. It was the sort of royal head-dress that Arthur Roberts would affect in impersonating some great monarch.

Our guide led us through some more bad bush and very long grass, which at times entirely hid the little donkeys; but after a tramp of about three hours we emerged once more in a great open country—a huge plain of long grass, dotted with small wait-a-bits and red bush as far as the eye could reach, and looking thoroughly "gamy" for elands and roan antelopes. The natives said there were a good many of these antelopes always here. The former they called "Puh," and the latter "Clabacalela"—rather a pretty name. There were also a few troops of sable, which they called "Pallah-pallah," and an odd reed-buck near the spruits. By evening we reached a long spruit of beautiful water standing in a channel in a great reed bed. As the place looked very "reed-bucky," the old man and I went for a toddle round, to see if we could pick up something for supper, taking Brenke with us in case we saw anything worth a run. After travelling down this spruit some way, my companion spotted a roan cow coming up from the water, and as the country was favourable for a stalk, we took Brenke as far as we dared, and then crept through the grass, and got within good shooting distance, as we thought. To our delight, on looking up there was a good herd of seven cows. Whether the wind had changed at the wrong moment I know not, but there they were slowly moving away, and I took the best shot I could, or rather two shots, standing in the long grass. Even these big bucks, when on the move, are not easy to shoot; so, though somewhat disappointed, I was not the least surprised to see the last disappear without a falter over a rise in the sky-line.

As the animals frequently stood to look back, Oom considered they were beasts that had not been shot at, and would consequently stop before they had gone far. I took Brenke, therefore, and we shortly afterwards started on the spoor. The old hunter was correct as usual. By and by we got well within range again before they began to move off, and this time my companion fired and hit the last cow somewhat low, upon which she immediately left the rest and went off by herself. Leaving him to follow her, I jumped on Brenke and started off in hot pursuit of the troop. The roans, now alarmed, strung out in Indian file and galloped away before me, and I put Brenke to his best, which was, however, nothing remarkable at any time. Brenke was a good, rough, hardy pony about 14.3, and though plucky and willing to the last degree, he was not up to my weight when it came to a long run, and I had to nurse him a good deal over the rough bits and deep sluits, where one could not see what was beneath. Over these bad places the roans walked away with their easy lumbering gallop, but on the open flats Brenke made the better progress.

As the country was open, the pace was pretty good for the first two miles, for I wished to see if the roans could be run to a standstill. Keeping about seventy yards in the rear, I could see and watch their movements well, and after three miles were over, I noticed that their necks began to drop a bit and their



A LION SCARING VULTURES OFF A KILL
(From a description by Jan Van de Mervel.)

mouths to open. Brenke had not had a proper run since the day at the buffaloes, so I expected him to be in better fettle than he was. It was therefore not a little discomforting to find him beginning to blow and labour considerably ; but after some hesitation I determined on one more try to get up close. Calling on him for a final effort, he responded nobly ; but now I saw, to my dismay, that the roans also woke up, except a big fat cow who was blowing like a grampus, and whom I now felt sure I should bag. The hunt continued long after this, as we got among the sluits again, where the game had the best of it, and it was all I could do to keep Brenke on his legs, as he was now fairly played out and I began to think my chance would not come. In the last two gulches, however, the strain of galloping uphill and down had told so severely on the big heavy antelopes that (as I saw) they were quite played out too, and could only go a short distance farther. And now, having chased them as nearly as I could guess about four or five miles, I saw the roans approaching another of those dry water-courses about seventy yards distant, and after one more effort I reached the near side bank just as they topped the summit on the other side. The fat cow came last, and though obviously pumped out, she did not stop, but turned to go on at once ; so I had to fire an end-on shot at her, which is generally an unsatisfactory one. By the way she staggered about and nearly came down, I saw she was struck badly through the left haunch, and thinking I should have no more difficulty with her, I ran down the bank and by main force hauled Brenke over the sluit, he was so done. Then, as I topped the farther bank, I got a glimpse of the wounded beast walking away amongst some small trees to the left of the troop, which had now disappeared ; so starting once more on my weary nag, I got within forty yards of the antelope, which I now saw was a very fine one, when Brenke stumbled and fell from sheer exhaustion, rolling me over in the long grass and filling the muzzle of my rifle with sand. Seeing, therefore, that nothing more could be got out of the horse, I ran after the roan, after clearing the barrel of my rifle with a stick and the breach with a good blow down : and then ensued a most exasperating foot-chase. Before I could get a fresh cartridge in, the animal stood well twice, and then, just as I was in a position to stop her, away she went, with only three legs at her command. All this time the light was failing rapidly, for the sun had set some minutes, and (as every one knows) there is little or no twilight in hot countries. And now I ought, of course, to have given up the chase and returned next day ; but fearing I might not be able to retrace my steps to the spot again, I foolishly ran on until the wounded beast getting amongst rocky ground, I knew that if I went any farther I should lose not only myself but my horse. But for that, I could undoubtedly have captured the antelope on foot.

In no very happy mood I returned, and without much difficulty found my steed, who was still standing with head down and heaving flanks. After some ten minutes' rest I started to return, moving, as I thought, in the direction of the camp, but after a walk of an hour it got pitch dark and I could only make a blind guess at the way home. I knew, however, I must have come somewhere about as far as I had ridden, so I climbed a high tree, in the hope of seeing the glow of our fire.

No ; nothing but impenetrable darkness presented itself on all sides. I was in for a night on the open Veldt—that was plain enough—so down I sat to meditate on the situation, and how to make the best of it.

Whilst musing thus I distinctly heard the subdued roar of a lion not very far off, answered by another apparently far away. That woke me up, and I lost no time in building a huge fire and tying up Brenke to a tree. The next thing was to cut grass for him with my hunting-knife. This task was laborious and not very successful, for to cut hard, coarse grass with a hand-knife is a slow process. Poor Brenke was so played out that he could not eat. I, too, was dead tired, and as hungry as an ostrich, having eaten nothing since the morning.

By and by the moon rose, and the lion again roared some way off. I climbed the tree again to have another spy. This time I thought I heard a shot, and a few minutes after I was sure that it was followed by another. The difficulty was to tell its direction, but happily all doubts were soon at rest. I heard the sound of frogs and water-insects close at hand, and then I knew that the spruit must be close by, and that I had only to follow it up westward to find the camp. Now riding at night in a country like this is not a very safe or pleasant undertaking ; but I was ravenously hungry, tired, and cold ; so I saddled Brenke again, and as the moon was bright and the ground flat and open, I cantered quietly along for about a mile, when I saw, to my joy, the gleam of the camp fire ; and not long after this I was enjoying tea and rostercooks, and some strong language from Oom Roelef, who had not only lost his buck but expended six of his cartridges on my unworthy self. The old man was in a great state of mind, and swore he would not let me go out hunting again without a string.

The following day I should have gone in search of the wounded antelope, but that I knew I could not find the place again. And now a petty chief turned up and said he would take us to a pan under the mountain where many roans, sable and koodoos, and some giraffes drank. We thought we could put in a week here very nicely, so decided to give him the present he asked for, and go with him to what he was pleased to call his game preserve. This was a toilsome and weary journey. We shot little, and indeed saw no game except one troop of sable, a herd of Burchell's zebra, and the dust of a giraffe; but we had a good two days of luck before we left the spruit, some details of which may not be without interest to my readers.

The morning following the chief's visit he sent that handsome scoundrel Chele over to guide us to his village. Chele said that on his way over in the morning he had seen a sable lying under a tree not very far away, and had left another man (his companion) to watch it till the white man should come and shoot. I thought this was a very funny thing for a cute antelope like a sable to do, and that probably it was only an ordinary native lie. By and by, however, we packed the little waggon, and Chele, Oom, and I walked on in front, on the chance of a shot, and just as we emerged from a dry watercourse, two fine reedbuck rams jumped up almost at our feet. Chele whispered "Thlango" (reedbuck), pointing with his finger (as if we had not seen them!) and got considerably excited. The animals were exceedingly tame or stupid, and only ran about thirty-five yards and then stood and stared. The larger ram, at which I fired, galloped away slowly for the bush, while the other one Oom knocked over with a good shot. I mounted Brenke at once, but had not gone 200 yards when I saw my buck swaying backwards and forwards under a thorn tree, and evidently done for, so I finished him at once. They were both good old rams, but rather disappointing as to their heads.[1]

This was at any rate a good start for the day, and put us all in good spirits; but a much better piece of luck was yet to come. Presently Chele pointed out a native sitting like a black marble statue under a tree. I did not take any particular notice of him, and had forgotten all about the sable bull which Chele had mentioned in the morning, when the native pointed to my rifle, and then to a tree about 200 yards off, exclaiming "Pallah-pallah!" There they were, beyond all doubt; for at the same moment the sable (which I saw at a glance had a splendid head) got up from beneath the tree, and began cantering lamely away. Seeing that it was badly wounded, I jumped on Brenke, and in a minute ran up alongside the bull and fired two shots, the second of which stopped him completely. He lay down and shook his grand head at me, and endeavoured to rise as Oom and the natives came running up. Another shot and we stood over the splendid creature, which we could now examine at our leisure. It was unhappily reduced to skin and bone, and from the scores and claw-marks in its back it was easy to see what had happened to the poor beast. A lion had evidently had hold of him recently, and after springing on his back had been forced to relinquish his hold by the blows he himself had received. The claws of the lion had drilled round holes in the skin, causing the flesh to fester beneath the wounds, whilst the whole of the quarters had shrunk away to nothing, probably owing to some big wounds on the haunches which had every appearance of bites. The poor sable had come off victorious for the moment, but he would no doubt have succumbed to his injuries in a few days, for he was evidently too far gone to recover.

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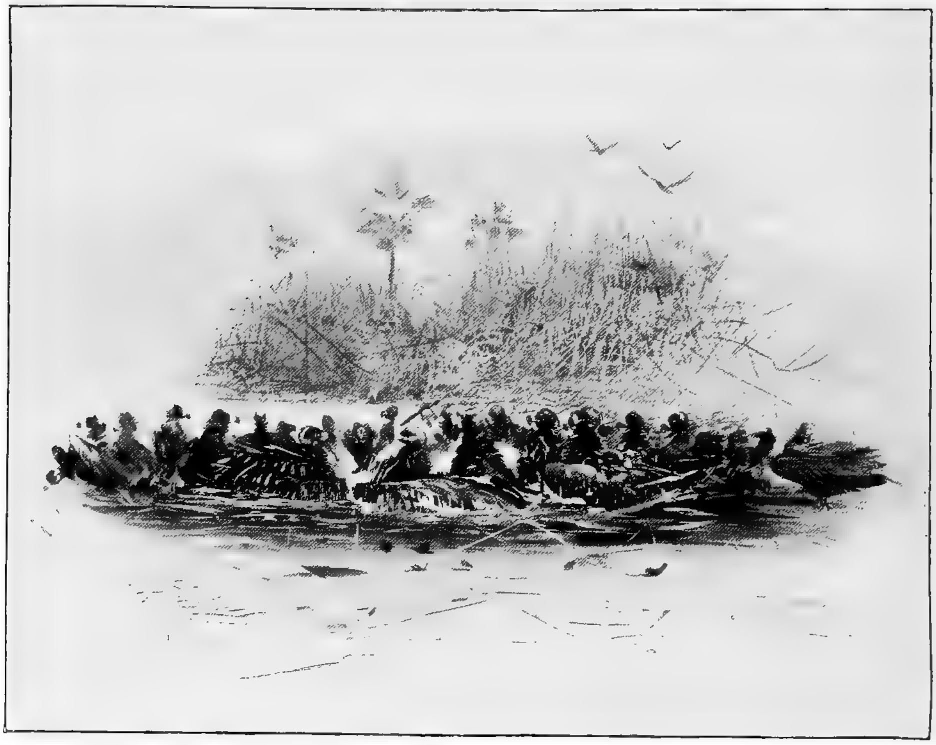
[1] A good Mashonaland head seldom tapes more than 12 inches, with an average span of 11 inches. Some old Transvaal heads far exceed this, one I measured recently in Lord David Kennedy's collection showing 15½ inches of horn length and good 16-inch span.

The measurements are as follows—length over the curve, 41 inches; circumference, 9½ inches; tip to tip, 12¼ inches.



A VULTURES' BATHING-POOL, NUANETSI RIVER

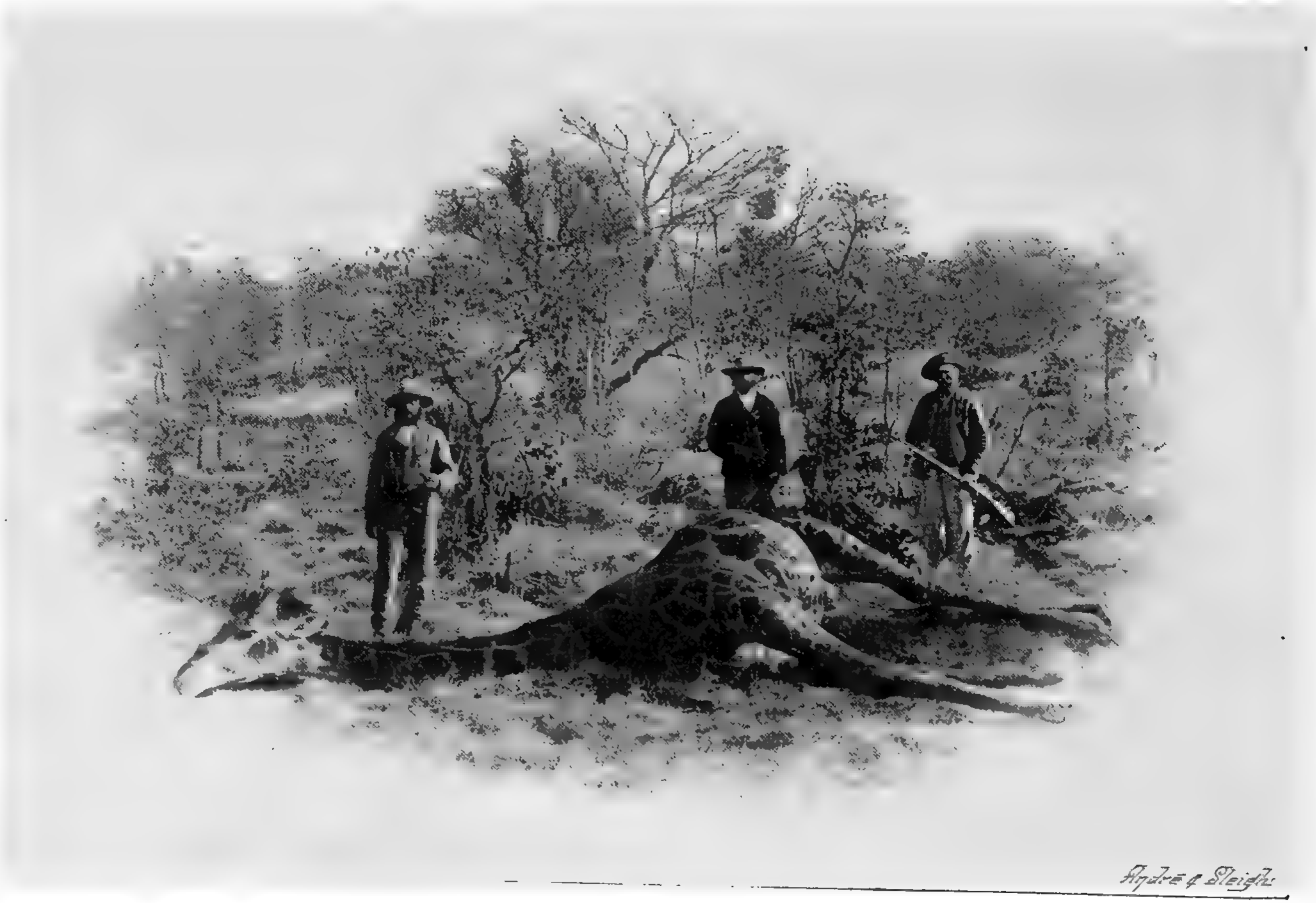
CHAPTER VIII

The day after our arrival at the Shangan village being Sunday, I lay by, smoked numerous pipes, sketched, and skinned, while the old man maintained our respectability by sitting in the sun at intervals with his hat off, and singing "the Old Hundredth." Van Staden was always nice, perfectly sincere and simple in all he did, and never more so than when singing his hymns. It was a real pleasure to listen to him; for though his voice was but feeble, and there was no surpliced choir, odour of incense, or high church dignitary to grace the occasion, the service was one of pure religion, fresh from the old man's heart, and its very simplicity, under these wild surroundings, made it all the more impressive.

Oom Roelef, however, was cast in a different mould. Whatever his belief, there was at least no particle of Sabbatarianism in it; so in the afternoon, when Chele, half drunk, turned up with the young men and boys of the village to the number of about forty, and asked me if I would like to see a dance, I readily consented. The dancers then ranged themselves in three long lines, the smallest boys being in front. There was nothing in the shape of a band; but to each foot of the dancers was suspended a little grass box, full of mealies, which gave a pleasant rattle as the feet were stamped. And what a dance it was! No hurry about it, no attempt on anybody's part to outshine a fellow-dancer, no music whatever except the voices of the dancers, singing as they went along a monotonous but not unpleasant chant, the burden of which was "Wa-sing-in-da," the Shangan word for "dance," I am told. To a critical ear the tune might not always be perfect, but the rhythmic mark of the time was beyond reproach; and for over an hour did these men and boys keep on advancing and retiring, with whirls and twirls innumerable, in the full blaze of the African sun. It was quite a relief when at last they ceased for refreshment, and took it in the shape of snuff (carried by the majority in a Martini cartridge case stuck in the left ear) and "da-ha," the African substitute for opium.

During the ensuing week we had nothing but hard work and disappointment. The chief, who came with us, took us to several pans away to the north-west of M'Pape's Mountain, but we saw nothing during all this time but a herd of Burchell's zebras, one of which Van Staden killed, and a big herd of sable antelopes, at which we never got a shot. At the farthest point we reached we found that two giraffes and several troops of blue wildebeest had been drinking there, and though I was not very keen to shoot one of the former, I should have liked to see them. Brenke's poor condition indeed was against my getting within shooting distance ; for that day at the roan antelopes had made a lot of difference in his appearance. We therefore returned to the spruit where we had killed the reedbucks, and as there seemed to have been some little game about, we decided to remain a day or two and hunt. This was very fortunate, for after a brief rest I got another good koodoo bull. Van Staden and I were returning one evening when this bit of luck came in my way. Suddenly across our front galloped a fine koodoo bull and three pallah ewes. I lost no time in jumping on Brenke and commencing the chase, for it was a good open country and excellent going ; and after going about a mile the koodoo, who was either out of condition or too old for a long gallop, caved in ; and getting right up to him I gave him a shot at close quarters that finally settled his career. He was a grand old fellow, with a beautiful twist in his horns, and amply compensated for the disappointment of the previous week.

Our donkeys now showed unmistakable signs of overwork, so we determined to press on to the Lundi, where we could give them a good rest while looking for the rhinoceros and other game. Accordingly we made another start eastwards into the open, flat, waterless country before us. During the morning I searched by myself for a troop of waterbuck that I had seen the previous week, while the old man went off to reconnoitre the country ahead and look for elands, of which there was fresh spoor. In passing through some bush I came on a fine troop of about twenty, all ewes except an old ram, who, unfortunately, stood so badly that I could not get at him till the herd had seen me and had run some distance. Presently, however, while sitting with my back to a tree, I had a good steady shot at him at about 100 yards, as he appeared on the sky-line ; but, though hit, he went off with the rest, and as the grass was long, I searched for more than an hour without success ; then back to the camp, where I found Oom frying some koodoo for his mid-day meal, and alternately cursing the donkeys and the country ahead. He came with me, however, to the spot where I had fired, and at once found blood, and the correct spoor.

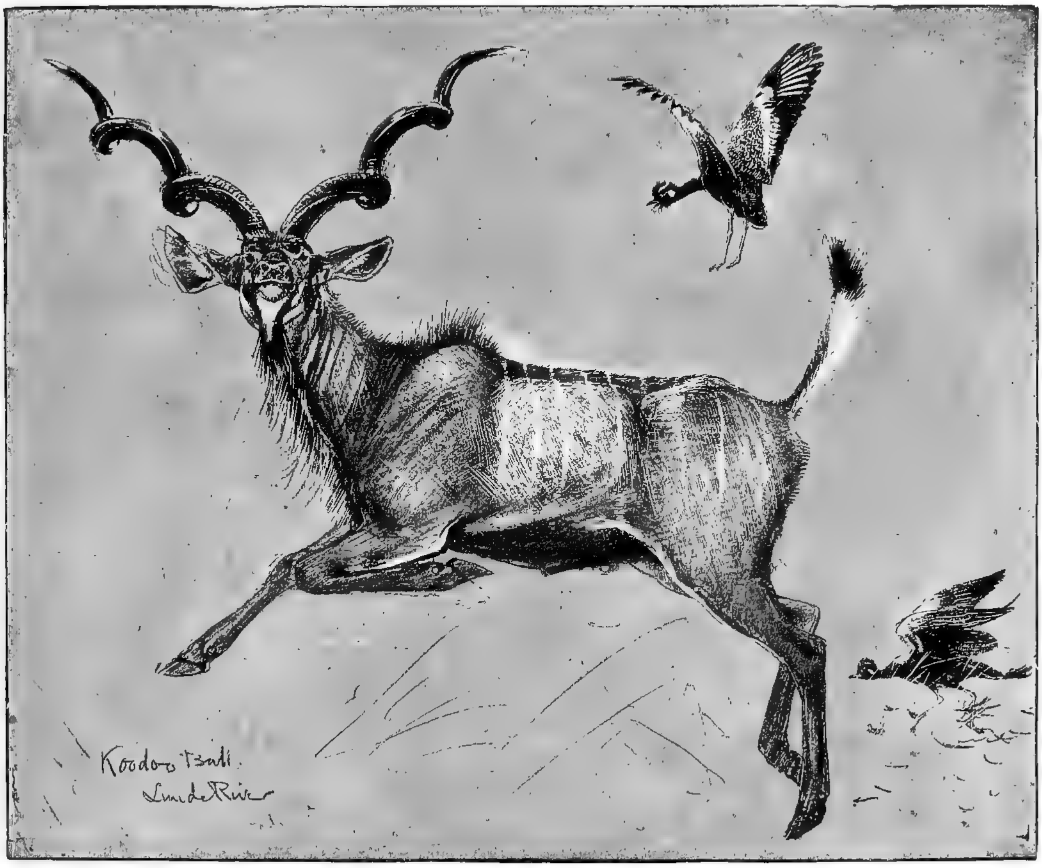


DEAD GIRAFFE AND DUTCH HUNTERS

(This beautiful photograph by Exton of Pietersberg shows admirably the relative proportions of a wild bull giraffe and man.)

But luck was against us; the animal had retreated to some stony ground, and we lost it irrevocably.

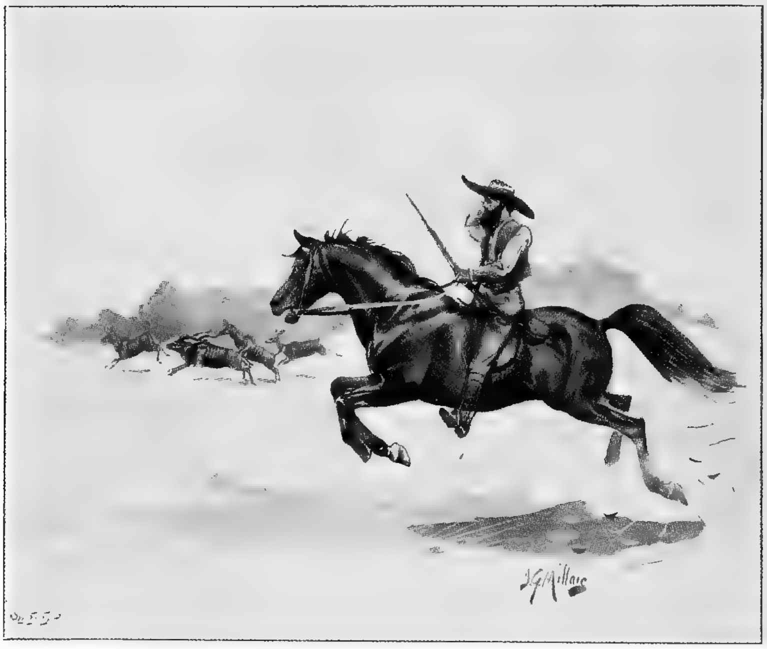
All that afternoon we journeyed on and struck a fresh waggon spoor, which we knew must lead to the Malala fountain, where the rhinoceros had drunk the previous year. But here again disappointment awaited us. We were just a week too late; for had the rhinoceros been there, these hunters in front would assuredly have got him. And now a strange sight met our eyes—strange, I fancy, even in Africa, for Van Staden had never witnessed a similar spectacle. A big locust cloud had alighted that afternoon, but the shelterless soil had proved even too hot for them, the earth being as hard as a brick and so hot that the hand could not be held on it. The locusts had therefore flown for refuge to the scattered trees, and here—clinging to the shady sides of the branches—they were massed five and six deep, giving the trees a lop-sided appearance, as if borne down in one direction with a load of bright green lichen. It was one



FIRST SPRING OF A KOODOO BULL AS HE STARTS TO RUN of those occasions when I longed for a camera, for only a photograph could give the reader a correct impression of this strange sight.

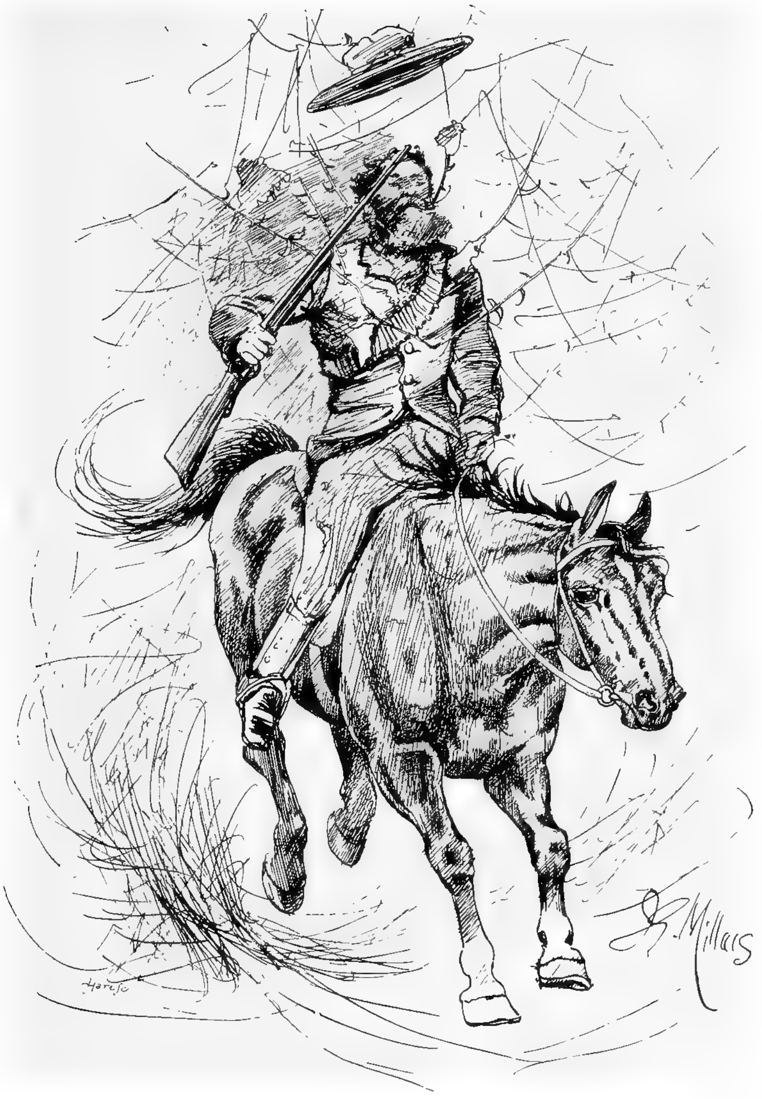
The following evening the donkeys were about done up, for we had been travelling all the previous afternoon without a drop of water either for man or beast. What was worse, too, there seemed to be no chance of finding any in this part of the world. Still the fresh waggon spoor we were following must lead, we thought, to water, however distant, and in that hope we pressed on.

Just at sunset, as the light was waning, the old man and I were walking along ahead of the waggon, when quite suddenly we came on a herd of sable antelopes. There was, as usual, one old bull and about twenty-five cows, and for the first time since we left the Limpopo my rifle was not in my hand, as I had given up all hope of seeing anything that evening. But in sport (as I ought to have remembered) it is always the unexpected that happens. I hastened to retrieve the loss by running back for Brenke and the rifle, but it was too late. When I returned the beasts were gone, and I found Oom running over the Veldt, anathematising the toughness of sable antelopes in general, and two in particular, which he had fired at and wounded. As the country was open, we followed the herd again, and got a few shots at about 300 yards, but without any result worth recording.



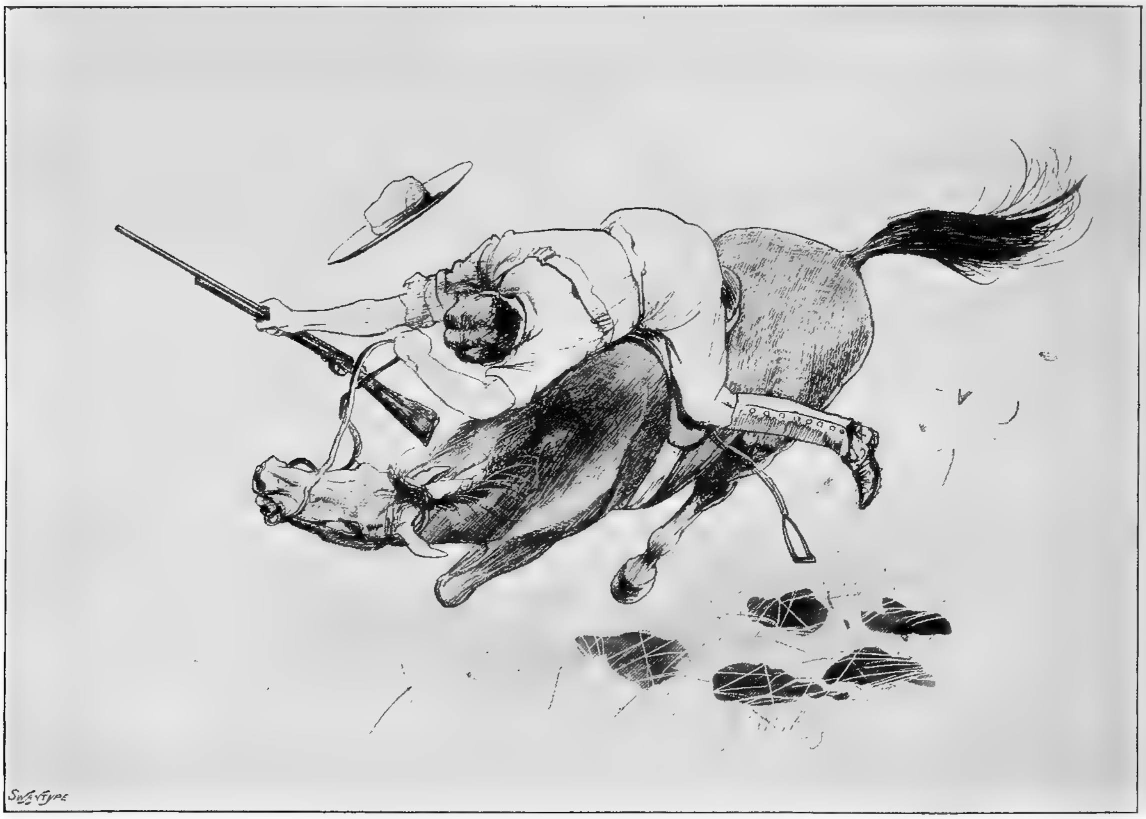
THE PACE IS HOT FOR THE FIRST MILE

Sick and sorry were we when we turned in that night. For myself, I was as dry as a duck in a hay-loft, and my companions, whether biped or four-footed, were doubtless in like case. Lack of water, too, means destruction to everything in Africa, and there seemed but too much reason to fear that the donkeys might not last out till we came across a supply—the more so as many of them were suffering from sore shoulders, owing to the hardness of the hide breast-bands, and could not therefore take any share of the work.



YOU MAY POSSIBLY LOSE SOME OF YOUR WARDROBE

Next morning poor Brenke showed signs of caving in for want of water, and we ourselves had none for breakfast. To follow the waggon spoor seemed the best chance of finding some; so off I set, and after an hour's ride, I climbed a tree, and saw far away in the distance a line of malala palms that I knew meant water. On coming up to them, however, only a dry spruit appeared where water had been, but was no longer. Then another half hour's ride, and straight before me there stood two white tent-covers of waggons, with blue smoke curling up between them. I need hardly say how delighted I was. Two minutes later I was enjoying a welcome and a cup of coffee, whilst Brenke was burying his nose in the muddy pool.

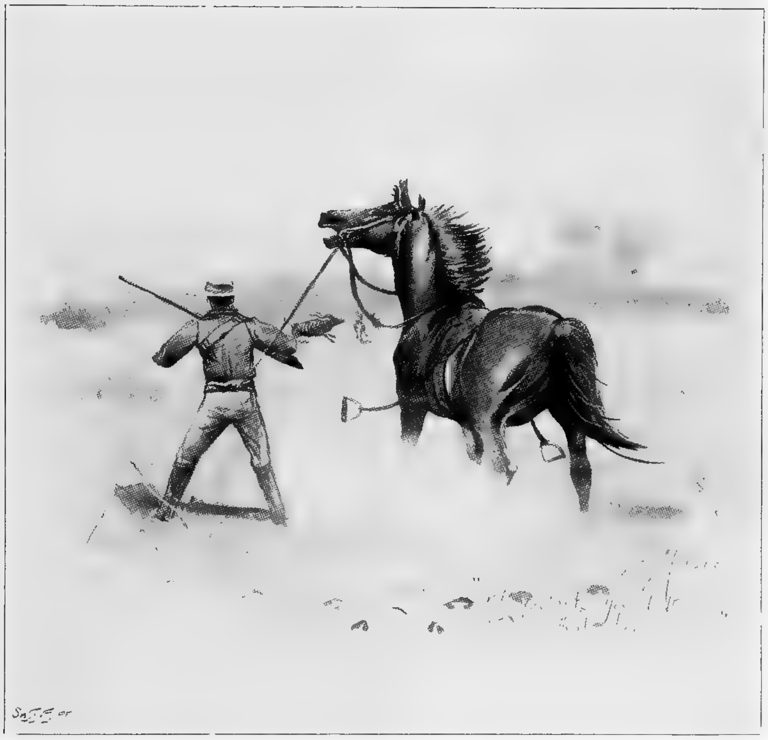


AND THERE ARE OCCASIONALLY A FEW HOLES

Fenter, the Dutch hunter whose family I now encountered, was standing here waiting for his mates, the two Randsbergs, who were away shooting hippopotami in the Lundi River, a day's march east. He described the last trek as being a cruel one even for good oxen, and seemed to think we were madmen for undertaking it with donkeys, which go only half the pace of the former.

When Brenke had well refreshed himself, I saddled again, and rode back to meet Oom and the donkeys. They presented a most forlorn and jaded appearance as they plodded along wearily through the brown dust and sand; but a day's rest put us all right again, and our small worries were soon forgotten in the hopes of the future. We had now passed through a small bit of the "fly" country, and emerged into a narrow strip of country between the Nuanetsi and Lundi, uninfected by the pest, and known only to a few.

From Fenter we learnt that there was hardly any game here, though a few troops of all the common sorts frequented the neighbourhood, including a big troop of Lichtenstein's hartebeest. He had, however, been here only a few days, so couldn't speak very definitely. The natives of some hills to the north had told him, he said, that there was much game in the Lundi basin, so I decided to go there if, after seeing these men, I was satisfied as to the chance of a rhinoceros being too remote.



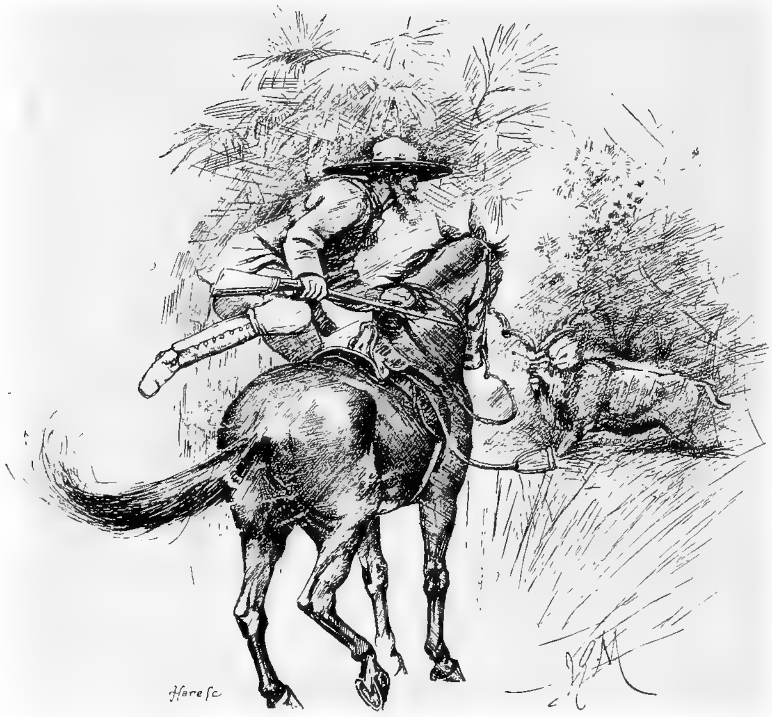
"UGH ! YOU BRUTE, YOU SPOILT THAT SHOT ANYHOW"

The water at the spot where we were now encamped was the very worst we had struck. One end of the mud-holes was a salt pan, which was white and glistening, and evidently much used by game at other seasons ; and consequently if holes were dug and the water filtered into them it was so impregnated with salt and mud that it was quite disgusting to drink, even when boiled.

Van Staden, who had been suffering slightly from dysentery, now became seriously unwell, and his removal to more healthy quarters was urgently needed.

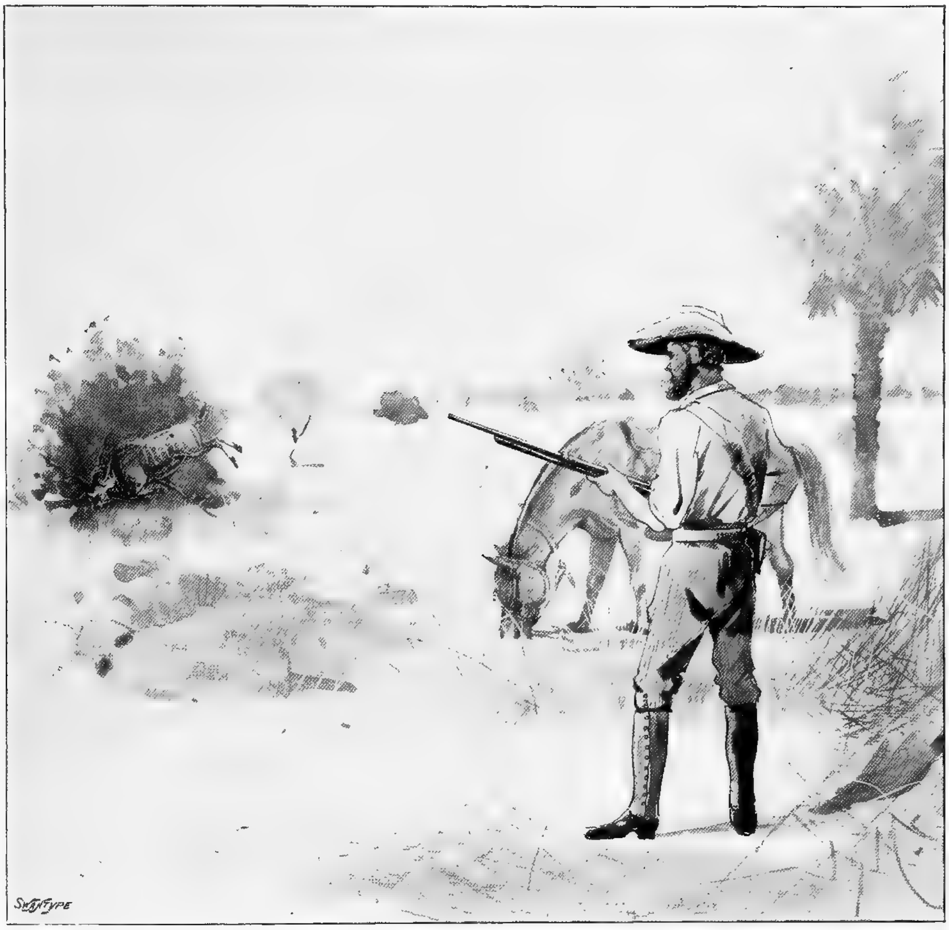
But as this was the farthest known pan in this Thirstland, it was the only base we could possibly work from in searching for water where rhinoceri might perchance be drinking.

And now came a chief named N'Dale from the mountains about fifteen miles to the north, accompanied by about twenty of his men, all well armed with assegais, etc. He himself was chastely attired in a billy-cock hat and a coat that had seen better days, whilst he carried in his hand several assegais, and an old Dutch elephant gun, which had evidently been unused for many years. But not all these attractions could overcome the repugnance one felt on looking into his face, where evil and cunning were stamped on every feature. He urged me strongly to come on to his village, saying he would give me bearers over the mountains to the Lundi, where the game was swarming; and in a weak moment I listened to his advice—only to find him as big a rascal as he looked. When once within his territory, he said I must pay for the right to hunt; but that I refused to do till I had seen some game. With him was a nice-looking, pleasant-faced boy named Clas, with some experience as a hunter, and he agreed to stay with me for a month, and show me all the pans and spots in the district where the game was.



HE STANDS AT LAST

He said the white rhinoceri (M'Combo) were now getting very scarce, but there were still a few left in the country to the south of us, and when disturbed from the pan where we now stood, they drank at two others known to himself, a day's march to the south.[1] So next day we set off into the open, waterless country of this great plain, though hardly expecting to see much in the way of game, as there was little or no spoor but of roan antelope, etc. As more than usual good luck, however, favoured us this day, I shall describe a few of its incidents. The weather was very hot even for the east coast, so we decided to take Prince with us, carrying two large water-bottles. And lucky for us we



THE "COUP DE GRÂCE"

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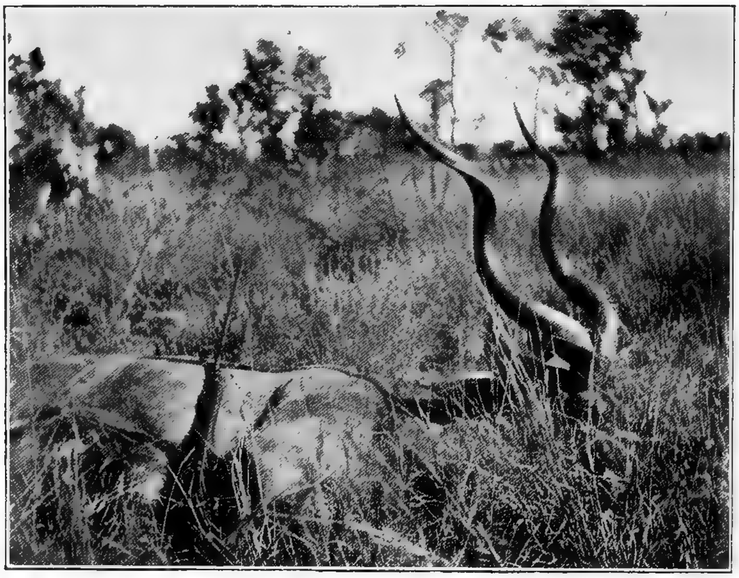
[1] There is a great extent of practically unexplored country in this part of Mashonaland; and there, I feel assured, when hunters penetrate, will still be found a few white rhinoceri. These animals have retreated into the "fly" belt, as has lately been proved by their existence in the north of Zululand, where they have long been considered extinct.

did, for I don't know how otherwise we should have got through our day, as we started at daybreak, and were not back into camp till long after sundown.

For about two hours Clas led us along a dry malala watercourse, and we were just thinking of sitting down for a few minutes, when by his movements I knew he had seen something. At first neither Van Staden nor I could make out anything in the distance, but after a minute or two a sable antelope walked out from beneath a palm, shortly followed by several others. As they had not seen us, and there were many trees about, we decided on a stalk; and after a series of manœuvres. and much dragging of ourselves along the burning ground, we got within 150 yards of the nearest cow. And now we saw that the troop consisted of about the usual number—twenty cows and quite young bulls, along with two bulls that seemed to be of mature age. One rarely sees, however, more than one old bull in a troop composed of mixed sexes; so I may possibly have been mistaken. At any rate two of the males seemed to carry fine horns, one particularly so. While we lay watching them from the shelter of a stunted malala, the animals suddenly made a turn in our direction, walking slowly along, and every now and then stopping to gaze around. I now saw that they would give me a good chance if I waited till they crossed our bows. Some movement, however, caught the sharp eye of one of the watch-cows, and I knew in a



A DEAD KOODOO BULL

Showing how unnoticeable the body of the animal may become when the sun is playing upon it.[1]

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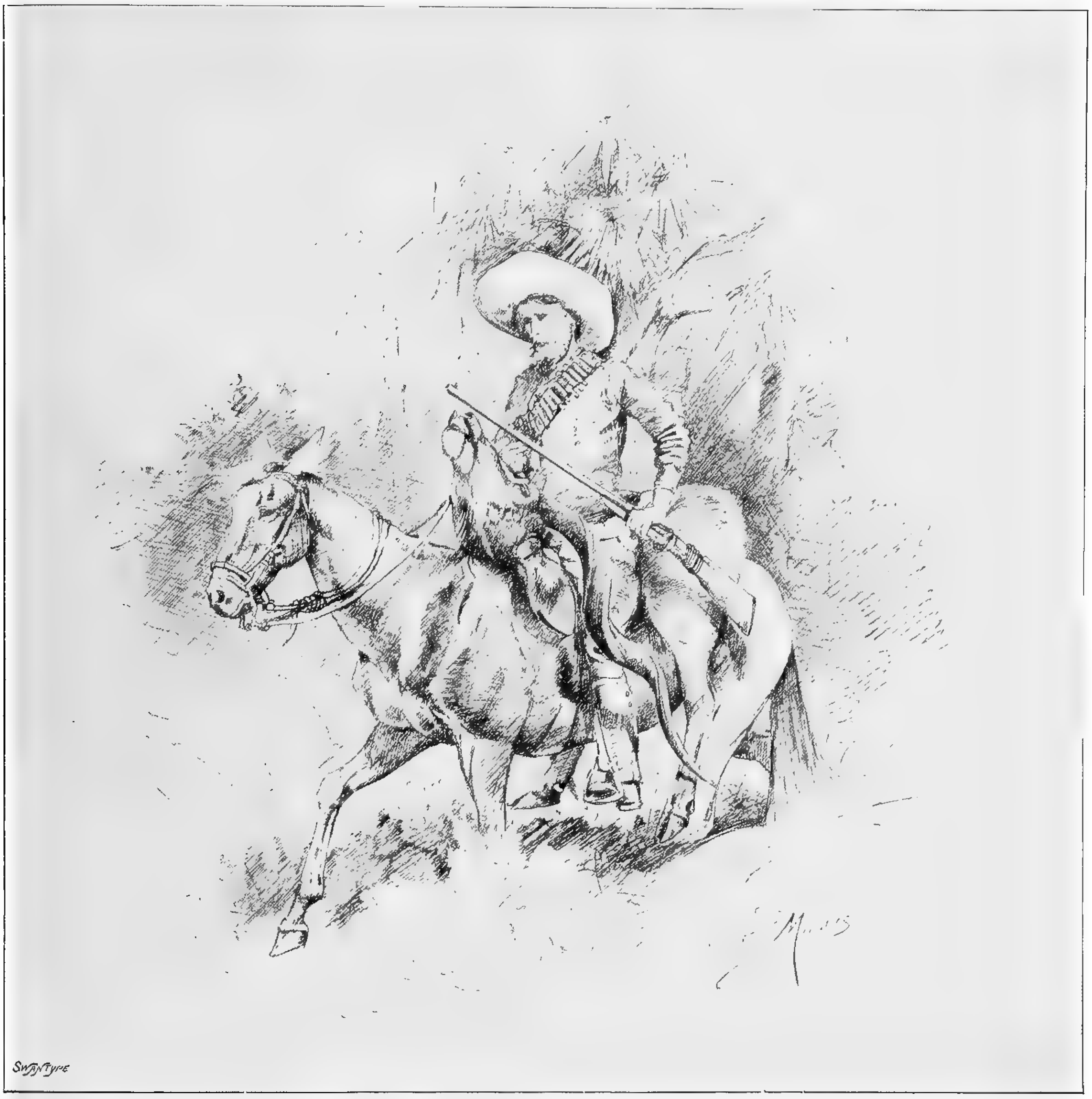
[1] From photographs by Mr. G. W. Banes.

moment we were detected. But one never need be in a great hurry with sables, for they will stand and sometimes gaze for a long time after their first alarm. Only one of the two big bulls was clear, so I took him, Van Staden almost

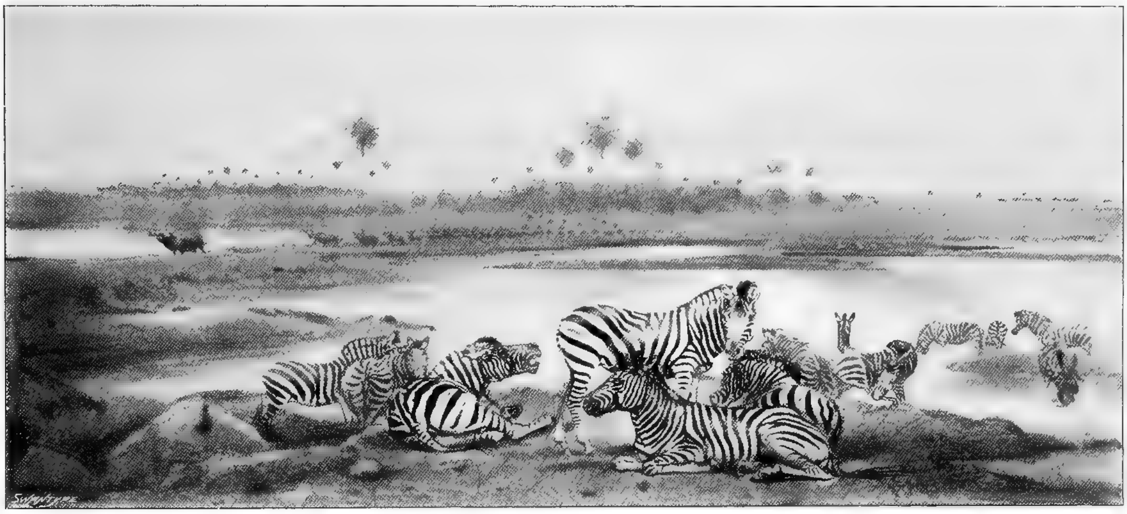


OFF HOME

immediately after firing at a cow, which plunged wildly forward a few yards and rolled over. My animal galloped off in front of the rest, but soon began to sway about—always a sure sign of being badly hit. We followed with all possible speed, and I was just beginning to think we should lose him, when he wheeled round and stopped, giving me time to get near and give him two more bullets, the second of which found the right place in his neck. This was not the best animal we had seen in the troop, but he carried a nice curved head of 36 inches.

After the grallock and bushing up the carcases we continued our journey, much pleased with our morning's work, and trudged on for another two hours over an open country. The burning heat of the sun now fell upon us with all its force, so we were obliged to lie down for a couple of hours and refresh ourselves. Presently Clas climbed a tree, and informed us we were close to the pan, as in fact was apparent from much old spoor of koodoos, sable, and roan antelopes; but nothing in the external features of the country indicated the presence of water, so we were rather surprised when the youth led us over a rise on to a small open space, in the middle of which a large bunch of reeds denoted the usual water-hole. There had evidently been water there within three or four days of our arrival, as the surface of the mud was still damp and slimy; but its absence now showed plainly enough that no rhinoceri were about. We were descending towards the pan, on either side of which was the whitened surface of salt bed, when Clas subsided again on his haunches, exclaiming in a whisper, "Tolo" (koodoo); and there sure enough were two koodoo bulls walking slowly away within seventy yards of us. One of the two

KAFFIRS CUTTING UP AND SKINNING A KOODOO BULL was so large that the other looked like a mere youngster by his side, but I learnt from Van Staden afterwards that he too was an old bull, though but a child in comparison with the larger beast. The vision of those splendid horns, I must confess, made me a bit "rocky," as the big beast swung round to stare at us, and though I managed to lie down and get a shady shot, the only response on the part of the koodoo was to whisk up his tail and gallop off with great bounds. Van Staden said he was hit, and I breathed again, though I did not hear the bullet strike, nor yet the shot he despatched at the retreating animal. We ran on, and kept the animals in sight for some minutes, and then had to slow down, as the heat was so killing. On some rising ground Clas found drops of blood on the grass, and shortly afterwards we saw that the two animals had separated, so Clas and I took up the spoor of one of them, while Prince and Van Staden stuck to the other. It was difficult for the moment to distinguish the spoor of the big bull, as both the animals were still cantering, and the points of the hoofs sunk so far into the ground that the length of the foot was not easy to determine. After going on for some time, and finding no more signs we were on the point of turning back when we heard two shots from Van Staden followed by a shout.



BURCHELL'S ZEBRAS AT A PAN

Knowing what that meant, Clas and I ran as fast as we could in the direction of the sound, and presently came on the old hunter standing over a finer specimen than I had ever expected to obtain. Following up the spoor, he had come quite suddenly on the koodoo standing under a tree. At sight of the enemy it of course bounded away, but a shot in the haunch, followed by another in the neck, put an end to its career. It was my koodoo—the koodoo of the splendid horns—and an additional gratification it was to notice that had my first shot (which had taken him through the brisket) been 2 inches lower, the beast would have got clean away. Here was luck indeed—the most lucky day of all my trip. Had I been hunting in Africa for many years I should probably never have got a finer koodoo than this, so I was more than pleased with my good fortune.

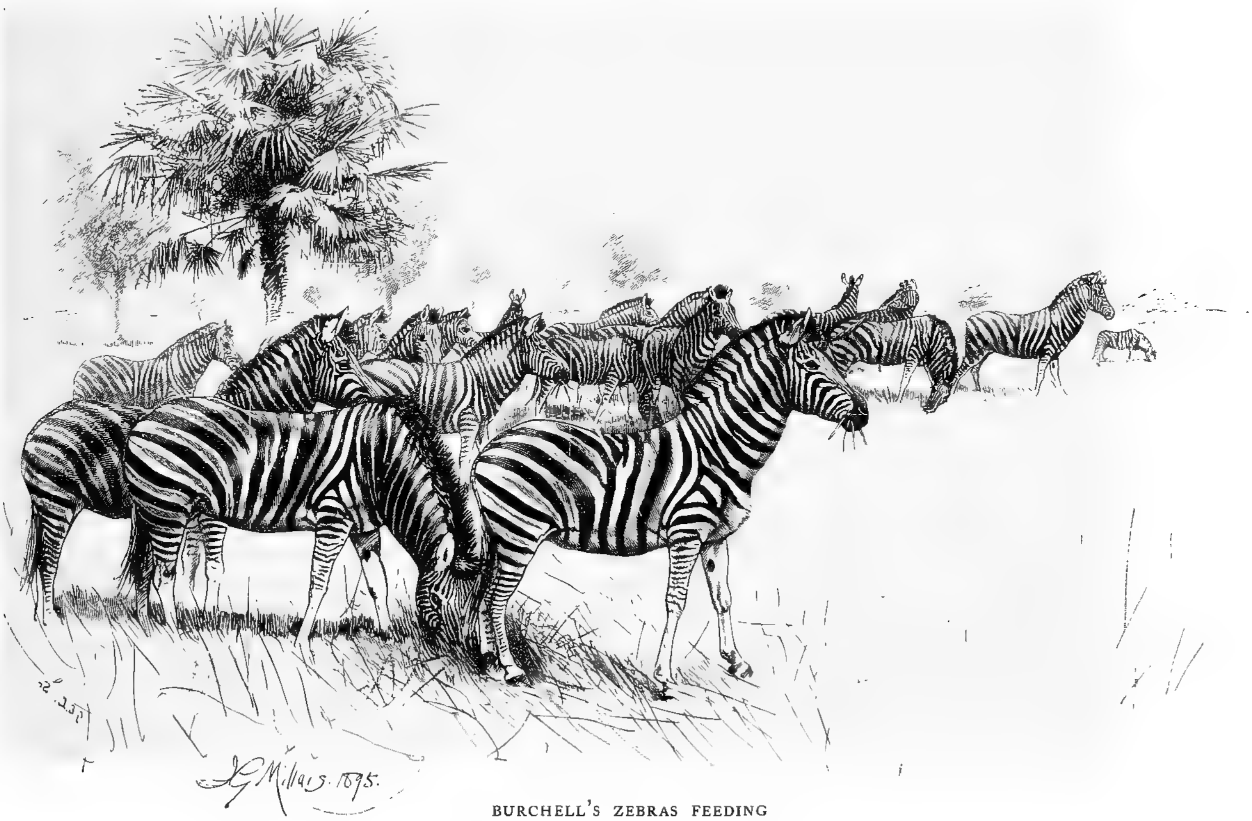
The measurements of the head are as follows:—straight line, 46 inches; round the curve, 58; circumference, $11\frac{5}{8}$; tip to tip, 39.

Van Staden said that many years ago in the Transvaal he had killed a finer head than this, measuring 4 feet from point to base; and in Cape Colony there are doubtless several heads that would tape this measure, but in this country we have not yet seen a 48-inch head. The largest known here is the one killed by Selous, of which a good picture is given in his last book by Mr. George Lodge. Another magnificent head is at present hung up in the Sports Club, having been lent by Captain Gibbons; and the record head, of which I give a photo, is probably the finest in existence.

The long tramp and excitement had made us both tired, hungry, and thirsty, and Van Staden, being far from well, had to stop frequently and lie down. He turned so deadly white that I feared he was in for an attack of fever, so we decided to lie by, and cook some of the koodoo meat.

After this I returned with Prince and Clas to the pan to examine the spoor of the various animals, and by and by Clas pointed out some great indentations in the ground, which he said were those of "Chukudu" (white rhinoceros). The footprints were more than a month old, but I have no doubt that they were the spoor of the animal he mentioned. He said there was no farther pan in this little Thirstland except one about five miles still farther to the south, and that that generally dried up in July, before the one we were examining, so the rhinoceri which still existed here must drink in some unknown pools, all south-east of the Lundi and Sabi. It was a hard tramp we had home that night, as I would not risk leaving the koodoo's head in the Veldt till the morrow, so Clas and Prince alternately carried it. I should have been sorry to tackle it by myself; but it is wonderful what a native, with far less physical strength than a white man, can carry. Here was this slim boy, Clas, stepping out in front with the great koodoo head as if he rather liked the job than not. Prince, who offered to skin the head, quite spoilt the skin and skull by chopping it out after the usual Dutch fashion ; but it did not matter much, as I had two other good head and neck skins.

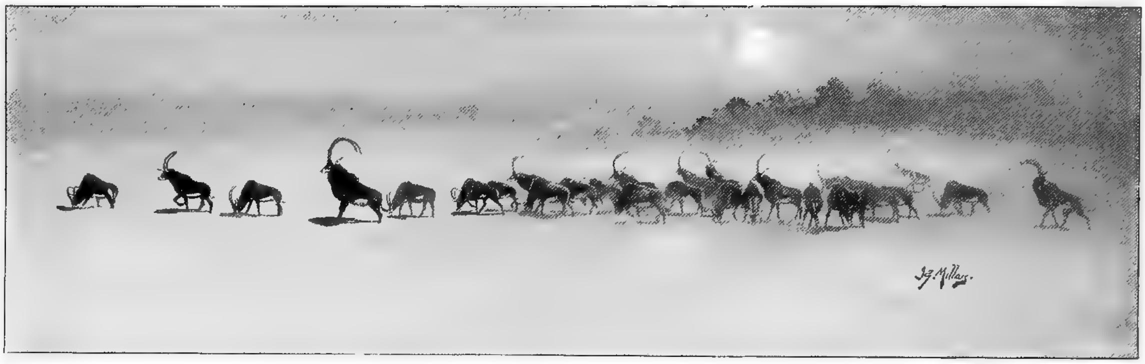
For the next ten days Van Staden was seriously ill. On the third day, indeed, I thought it was all up with him, but as luck would have it, the old man had been a teetotaler all his days, and now whisky served him in good stead. But for this I honestly believe he would never have pulled through. Any one who knows what a bad attack of dysentery means—how completely it saps all the vital forces—will know how difficult it is to save even a strong man from utter collapse under an attack. Had not Oom Roelef possessed originally a constitution of iron, he could not, I think, have passed through what he did. For four days we remained by this dirty mud-hole, and though N'Dale came again and begged us to come over to his village in the mountains, where he said the water was good, I did not like to run the risk of moving the old man in his weak and exhausted condition. At the end of the fourth day he was a bit better, thanks to oatmeal and whisky—a right good remedy which every Scotchman will approve of—so we packed him on the donkey waggon and, with Clas for a guide, headed for the mountains. As we approached the hills the bush



BURCHELL'S ZEBRAS FEEDING

became so thick, and we got so frequently hung up, that our progess was slow and rough, so I thought it would be better to get the old man up on Brenke, whose paces were more comfortable. And so it proved to be. Our progress was at best very slow, the donkeys, even with their short rest, not having recovered much in condition; still by the afternoon we were winding our way along the base of the precipices on the summits of which, perched like little birds' nests, were the straw-thatched rock dwellings of the Shangans. It was a most beautiful and picturesque site for a village. Many of the huts were placed on isolated pinnacles, the ascent to whose summit looked impossible, yet there were to be seen the natives, looking like little black ants as they climbed up the rocks to their mountain homes.

Big trees, dense vegetation, and beautiful scenery now took the place of the barren and desolate Thirstland; and to say nothing of the advantage of a few days' rest, this was a beautiful spot in which to study the real wild natives at home. As we moved along through the high grass at the base of the mountains we came across several little family groups of women and children, either pounding mealies or engaged in other work; but the moment they saw us they took to their heels and ran screeching away, being obviously unaccustomed to the sight of a white man. In many cases, however, curiosity got the better of fear; looking up the hill-side, you could see here and there a little black poll curiously peering round the side of a bush, and disappearing immediately it was noticed.



SABLE ANTELOPES FEEDING[1]

A good water-hole, with lovely blue water-lilies floating on the surface, was now within sight, and there we outspanned, directly under the cliffs and

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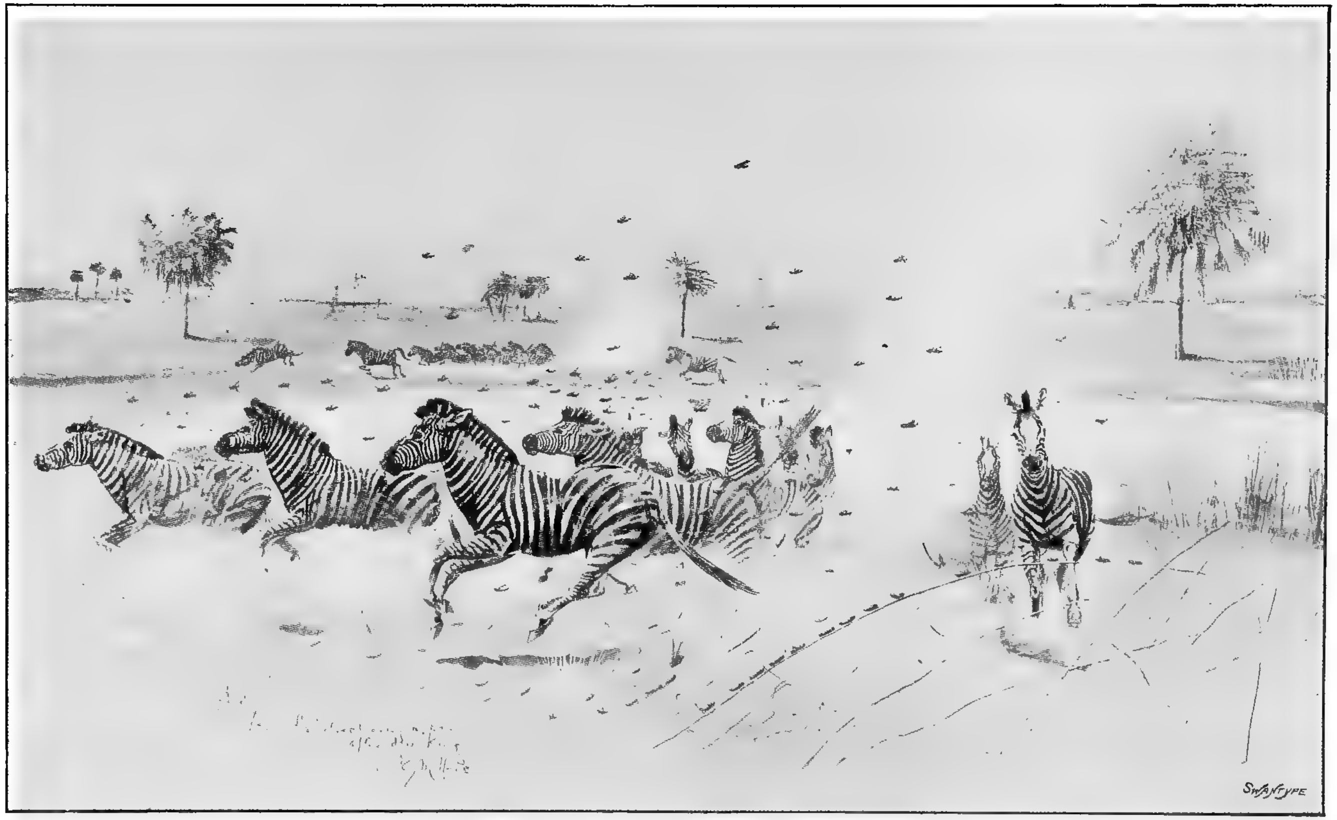
[1] I would call the naturalist's attention to the formation adopted by wild asses and antelopes when feeding. The former, whilst moving slowly, maintain a crescent, whilst the latter keep in a string.



BURCHELL'S ZEBRAS LEAVING A PAN AFTER DRINKING

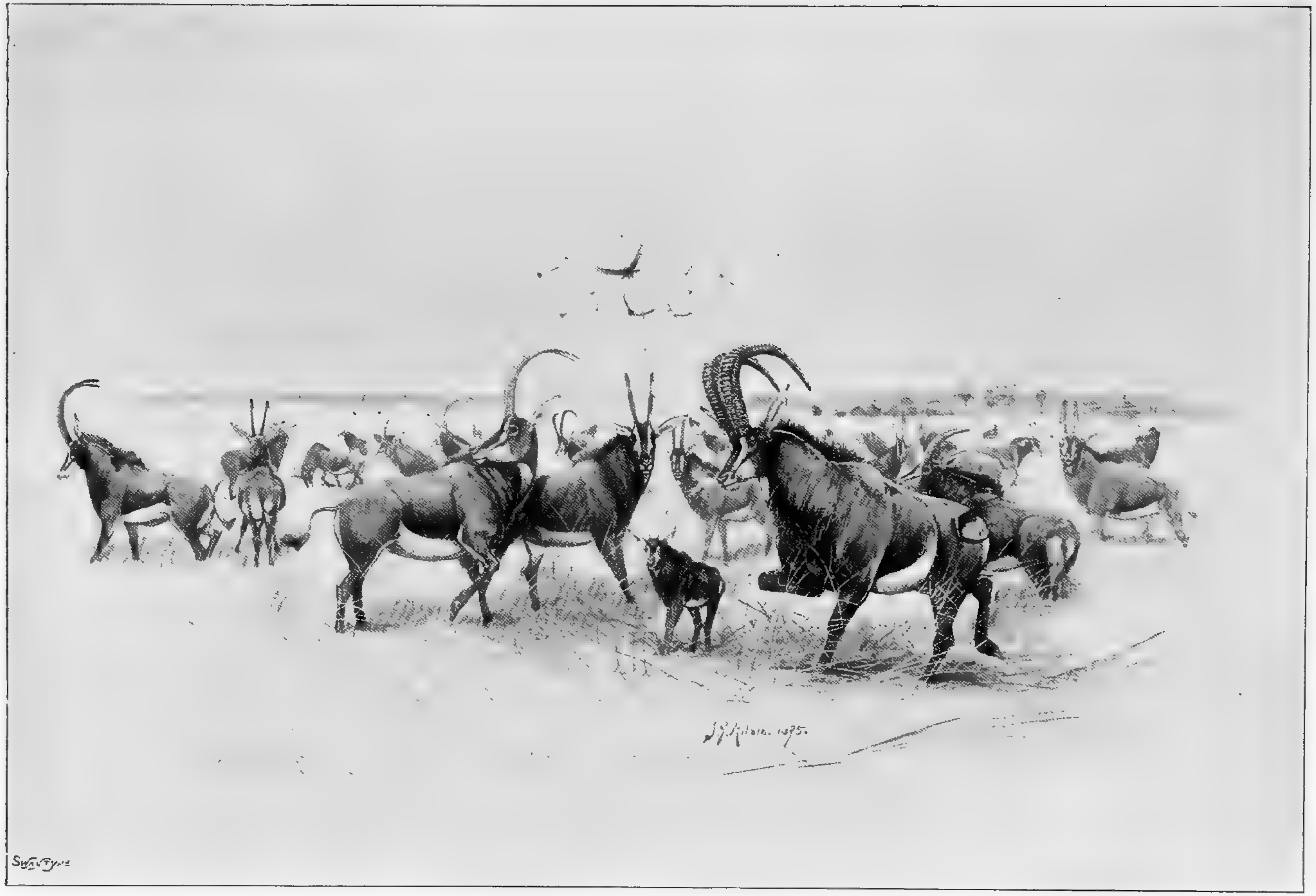
close to an immense mealie patch full of guinea-fowls. These guinea-fowls are a constant source of food supply to the natives; each man has a portion of the field to himself, and there he sets snares and catches two or three of the birds every morning.

About sundown N'Dale turned up with all his warriors, to the number of forty—in readiness, he said, for a Matabele attack which might happen any day. Now N'Dale at the pan where I had first met him, clothed in a billy-cock hat and an old greatcoat, and humbly asking for a small present, was a very different creature from N'Dale in his own village, clad in all his savage finery, and surrounded by his warriors. His manner and that of his men was, to say the least of it, insolent and disagreeable, and I soon saw that, thinking he had fairly got us on toast, he meant to blackmail us pretty freely before we got out of his clutches. He wanted a new Martini rifle and fifty cartridges as payment for guides over to the Lundi Mountain, to which I replied I would pay for guides and carriers, and would give him the rifle on my return, if I found game; but though we got on pretty well for a time, no conclusion was come to. The natives meanwhile began pressing round the waggon, and it was no easy matter to prevent them from pilfering things from it.

As nothing could be settled that night, I was relieved when the chief departed and took most of his followers with him, for I foresaw there might be trouble. There had not been a white man here for thirteen years, the last visitor being an unfortunate Dutch hunter who had been taken over to the Lundi by some of N'Dale's men, to hunt hippo, and who had died of fever on his return. Most of the people had therefore never seen a white man, and the tricks they played to find out what manner of men we were, were at times more than we could stand.

Close by the pool where we were encamped was another smaller one, and at the side of this was the fresh spoor of a lion. Thinking it somewhat odd for a lion to be hanging round almost within the village, we made inquiries, and to our surprise Office reported that, though the natives solemnly denied it, a lion had been there quite recently. With this lion about, we ought of course to have made a thorn "scherm" for protection during the night; but we were all very tired with our long trek and Van Staden very seriously ill. N'Dale, too, did not leave till it was nearly dark, so we had little time for such preparations. Had we known what was to follow we should have been more careful; however, most of us have to learn wisdom by hard experience.

Van Staden went to sleep early that night, to my great relief, as he had had no rest for several days previously. Even his loud snoring was good to hear. But for some reason or other sleep refused to come my way. I just lay on my side, thinking over events, and listening to Prince and Office talking by the fire, till they too fell asleep. It was one of those nights when the air seems charged with a perfectly inky darkness, such as no one can understand unless he has been in Africa or some similar clime. Everything was deadly still save the occasional stamping of Brenke, or the cry of some night bird, when, about midnight, a lion roared splendidly quite near to us. Prince heard it too and was sitting up, so I told him to pile some more logs on the fire ; and as he was doing this Brenke, who was tied to the waggon, snorted loudly and began to strain at his riem. There could only be one conclusion, namely, that the lion was close to us and the pony had seen it. Jumping up at once, I noticed that the two of the donkeys in our team (Mrs. Langtry and Gladstone) were tied to a small tree at the end of the disselboom ; and thinking that these were a bit too far away from the fire to be safe, I said to Prince we must move them closer in. Hardly were the words out of my mouth when there was a sudden uproar amongst the donkeys beside us (they were barely five yards from the spot where Prince and I were lying) and on glancing up we had just time to see one of them turn completely over. The flickering light of the fire shone only on the quarters of the animal, leaving the rest in darkness, and for the life of us we could not see what it was that had upset him. But that was only for a moment. Prince seized a burning brand from the fire, and began yelling "De lieuw, ow baas," addressing himself alternately to Van Staden and me, and I must say it was a moment of intense excitement. We knew instinctively that the lion had killed the donkey, and was standing over him ; but it was hopeless to fire until we could see something, or at least make certain as to his whereabouts. And now, as bad luck would have it, Mrs. Langtry and her foal managed to smash their riems and break away in terror from the tree to which they were tied. They must have galloped almost over the lion as he stood by the donkey he had killed, and so have roused a further desire for blood. All this was the work of only one or two seconds. In another moment we heard the lion chasing first one donkey and then the other, and one of them having fled for refuge into the big mealie patch, about thirty yards away, we distinctly heard every movement of pursuer and pursued as they rushed through the stalks. At every bound he emitted a subdued "boo-uff" as his forelegs struck the ground, and then came a loud scuffle, a crack, and the sound of a heavy body falling, after which all was still. But only for a moment. The lion evidently found the other loose donkey,


J. G. Millais. 1895.
Swain Sc

SABLE ANTELOPES SUSPICIOUS

which gave him a longer run ; he chased him completely round the camp, and then the sound of the rushing animals was heard no more.

It may seem to the reader an extraordinary thing that a lion could thus come right up to a hunter's camp, and quietly kill three of his donkeys without offering a chance for his own destruction, and some perhaps may think we missed a fine opportunity for performing one of those wonderful feats that distinguish the sportsman of the modern novelist ; but as a matter of fact we could never see anything to shoot at, and to shoot without seeing would have been too silly for words. Though the lion was almost within touch, he was as safe as if he had been a mile away. When it was all over we could only sit down, anathematise the lying natives, and blame ourselves for our carelessness in not having made a "scherm."

Soon after daybreak next morning we went to look at the carcases, the first of which was lying about forty yards away in the mealie patch. It was untouched ; so we proceeded to search for the other donkey which had also broken loose. We soon found this also, or rather what remained of it, for the lion had evidently been desperately hungry and finished the animal at one meal, only the head, shank bones, and feet being left. Van Staden had not the slightest doubt that the lion had heard us coming, and made off as we approached, for there was his spoor as he galloped away from the kill. With the aid of Clas we followed it as far as we could, but lost it at last in the rocks at the foot of the hills.

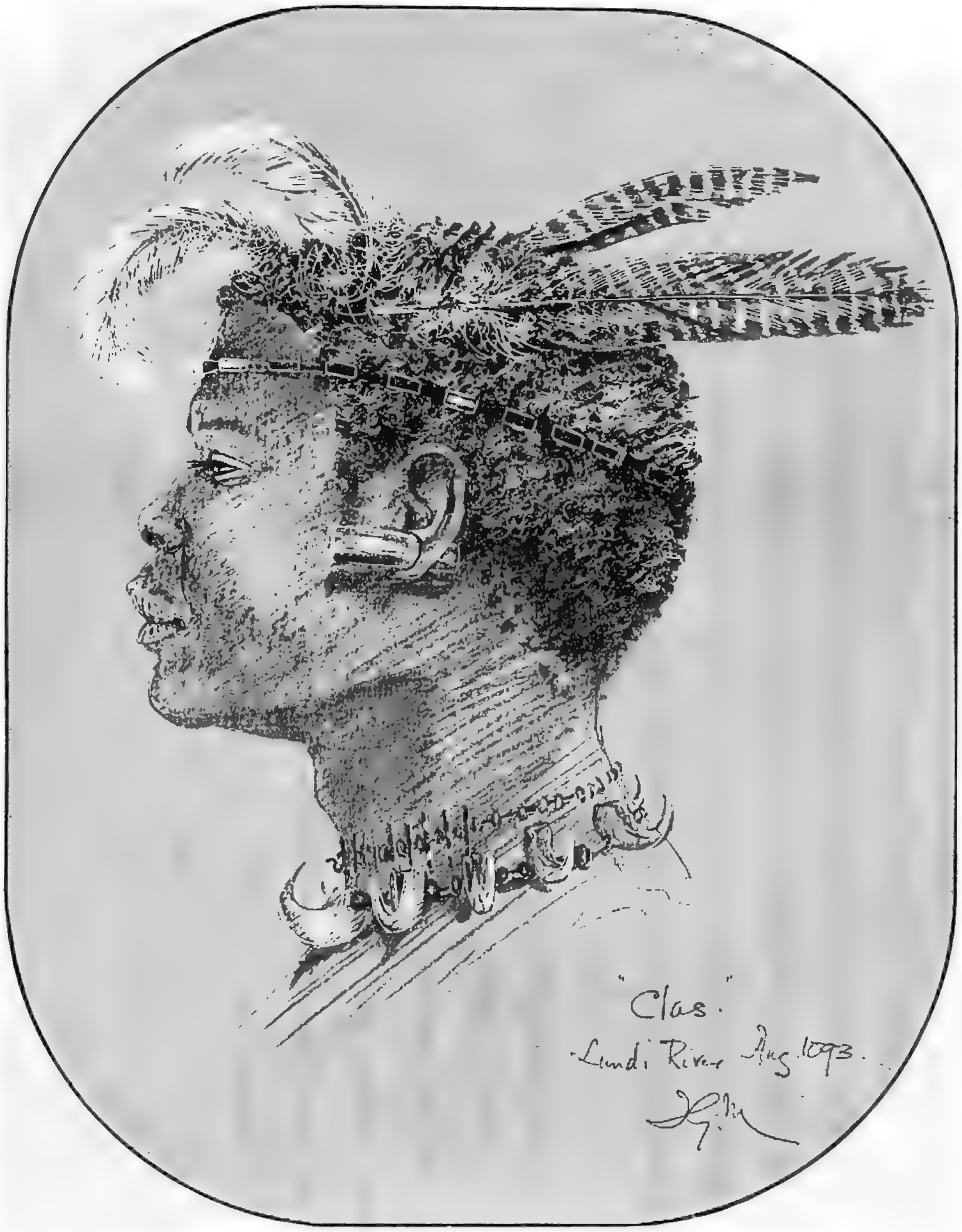
A close examination of the donkey killed on the disselboom left no doubt that the lion had rushed up to his victim from the front, and fixed his right paw in its left shoulder, at the same time forcing the animal's head down with his left paw on the right cheek and biting where the vertebræ join the head, thus dislocating the neck and causing instantaneous death.

The loss of these donkeys (amongst which, of course, were the two best) was most disheartening, as it frustrated all our plans. The team, as it was, could ill draw its heavy load, and now that these two animals were gone, it seemed doubtful whether we should ever get the waggon over the mountains, or back to the Nuanetsi.

As the morning advanced came more worry. Van Staden was still very ill, and his condition caused me great anxiety ; and now the natives, to whom our misfortunes had been revealed by Clas, came down in force and openly jeered at us. They said, in so many words, that if the white man or his guns were of any-use we should never have allowed a lion to come up and take the donkeys from our very fireplace. This was all most irritating, and as the day wore on they became more openly aggressive, attempting to steal things off the waggon. Affairs were beginning to look disagreeable when N'Dale turned up, and I had another long and shilly-shallying "powwow" of the usual type. He now said he could not let me go away until his brother M'Male came from over the hills, as part of the Veldt belonged to him. This, of course, meant another delay and more blackmail. But there was no help for it. I could not start for at least two days, by reason of the poor condition of the donkeys, and N'Dale would not promise me any bearers; we wanted moreover to have our revenge on the lion, and so perhaps to gain some little prestige that might help us in dealing with our tormentors.

During the afternoon we beat all the bush alongside the mountain where we thought the lion might be lying up; but without success. We then decided that I should sit over one carcase, and we should make a "still" over the other one, which we had dragged under some suitable trees near the camp. A "still," I may say, is formed by two rifles fixed to trees or posts guarding the entrance to a "kill." A fine cord connected with the triggers is stretched across the entrance, and the chances are that a visitor approaching the bait will receive both bullets in the right place if the line is set at the correct height from the ground, which in the case of a lion is about a foot above a man's knee joint. In the wilds of South Africa every hunter is more or less obliged to employ this means of destroying lions in districts where they are particularly numerous and objectionable; if only for the protection of such oxen or donkeys as he may have with him. Being in reality the worst and most dangerous of vermin, they have to be exterminated by any means, fair or foul, for they are so seldom seen during the day that the chances of shooting them in sportsmanlike fashion are rare, and the mischief one strong and bold lion will do in a year, once he takes to the waggon and kraal business, is very great.

By sundown all was ready for His Majesty in case he should pay us a visit. One carcase had been most artistically prepared for his reception, whilst over the other I sat shivering up a tree. The night was so bitterly cold and intensely dark that by eleven o'clock I decided to relinquish my post; for, should the lion come below me, I could not make sure of killing him, as I could not even see the end of my rifle, and the only bough I could find to perch on was ten yards from the ground. So Prince and Office came to me with great firebrands, and we dragged the carcase of the donkey up within sight of the fire, hoping that the lion would visit either me or the "still."

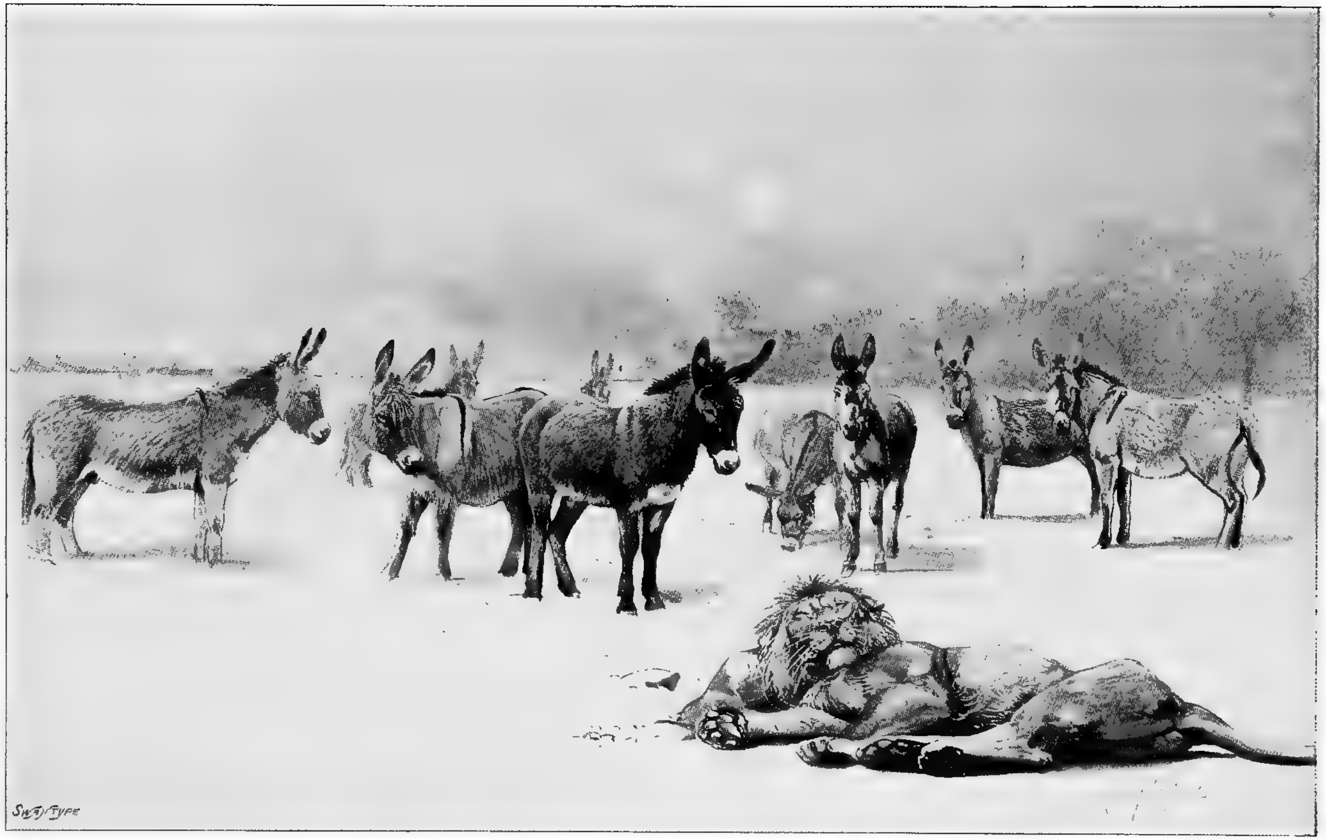

"Clas."
Lundi River Aug. 1893.

"CLAS," A SHANGAN HUNTER

It must have been some time after midnight, for I had sat up till nearly twelve, when bang went one of the two fixed rifles, immediately followed by another shot and a succession of loud roars, gradually dying to a painful moan. We knew then that His Royal Highness had arrived, and had received the welcome prepared for him. For the first time for many days the old man beamed with delight; the enemy, he said, had got the shots properly, and all things were now lovely. Clas now began yelling in Shangan, and was answered by a still small voice far away up amongst the rocks, and Office presently informed us that the chief was coming down to look us up. Yellow flashes of light began to appear in the bush, and presently N'Dale and his three sons, all fully armed, arrived and squatted by the side of the fire. He said he was going now to dance on his enemy, the lion, and invited us to accompany him. This was of course a bit of swagger on his part, as well as a draw, to see what we would do, but (as Artemus Ward says) "not being natural born fools," we declined the bombastic invitation. Now—whether you are an old hand or not—hunting up wounded lions without the aid of dogs is a ticklish proceeding even in broad daylight; but to go and take your chance of finding a possibly wounded lion on a pitch-dark night is what no man in his senses would think of doing. So telling him (in politer language) that if he liked to make an ass of himself we should offer no objection, we sat still to see what he would do next. Four other natives now turned up, and by N'Dale's orders made big grass torches, and started away from the fire in the direction of the "still." This, I suspect, in the hope of moving us, for they returned at once, saying the grass would not keep alight. We all waited therefore till daybreak, by which time a rabble of heavily-armed natives had assembled. Then, when the light was sufficiently clear, we formed line, Van Staden on the right, myself in the middle, about thirty yards distant, and the Shangans in a bunch on the left. We had advanced close up to the position of the still, when I saw the back of the lion about ten yards in front of me. Though in a crouching attitude, there was something about its pose that struck me as being unlike life. I accordingly took a step to my right to obtain a better view, and a shot if necessary, when half a dozen assegais came whizzing through the air, from the Shangans on my left, accompanied by yells of joy and exultation. I now saw that the lion was dead; and, all coming up, we examined the destroyer of our peace. He was a large, full-grown, and thick-set animal of 10 feet from nose to tip of tail, and was in splendid condition, being very fat. Like most South African lions, however, he had a poor and scrubby mane. N'Dale quietly observed that he was glad the lion was killed, as he had suffered much from him, for the brute had lately taken to attacking women when he could not get game or native goats, and had already killed six from his village alone. As we sat at breakfast the whole village turned out to see the beast, and great was the rejoicing over his downfall. Both bullets had taken him nicely behind the shoulder.

After this N'Dale and his people became more civil to us, and after a short delay he agreed to let me have six porters to assist me over the mountains. Then, as Van Staden was a little better, we made all haste to start, Prince packing up while I skinned the lion. A curious fact about this lion was that on some recent occasion he had caught and eaten a porcupine. He had evidently, however, had had some trouble with his meal, as in the ball of his right paw were deeply embedded several of the quills of his victim, and there being no man of the Androcles stamp knocking about Mashonaland, he must have suffered considerably, as the stabs had penetrated at least 3 inches into his flesh. Prince begged for the fat round the heart, which he kept in a condensed milk tin on my waggon for two months afterwards; and very evil smelling it was. At last, to my relief, he sold it to some Zulus for a considerable sum, as the tribe have great faith in its powers as an unguent and an incentive to deeds of bravery.

And now—in our attempt to get over the mountains—we began to find out what the civility of N'Dale and his people meant. After a long and painful march we managed with great difficulty to reach the summit, and descending we entered an excessively rough and beautiful defile of massed boulders and great trees, through which it was impossible to pass. It was, in fact, a blind alley, for there was no exit on the other side; and I am quite sure now that the natives led us into it, knowing that we should be stranded and probably have to abandon our waggon, which they could then come and loot at their leisure. After a time, finding it impossible either to proceed or to back out, I went on a couple of miles ahead, to have a look at the country. Then, seeing only too clearly what a hole we were in, I returned to Van Staden, whose only effort at comfort was a quiet remark that we should have no more trouble with the porters, as they had all bolted. These porters had carried most of the loads which were originally on the little waggon, and now we were in a fix as to how we could get the waggon back, even without the loads. After some discussion I determined to go back to N'Dale by the way we had come; and though it took us two most wearisome days to accomplish, we eventually got the poor donkeys up to the summit again, and then loaded up once more



RETRIBUTION

and descended to the village again. It was very hard work, and I am afraid I was a bit savage all the time. Immediately I arrived I sent Clas (who had stuck to us) to N'Dale to tell him I intended to go back to my people again, and to ask why he had treated me so. He was also to demand the rifle again. Next morning very early came several of his headmen and squatted round the fire, and presently the chief himself turned up, and was greeted by the others with slow clapping of the hands—the usual Shangan salutation. And now began a pretty game of bluff between me and my wily adversary. I knew that the donkeys could not pull the waggons a mile into the desert again, so dead-beaten were they, and we could not hope to reach the Malala fountain unless they had three days' rest ; but I told him straight out that, disgusted with the trick he had played us, I should trek back at once to my people on the Nuanetsi, and he must return the Martini rifle I had given to him. He replied blandly that my request could not possibly be acceded to, as he had sent the rifle as a present to Gungunhlama, the head chief of the Shangans. At this I pretended to be very angry, and ordering Office to inspan the donkeys, I took no further notice of N'Dale. All was presently ready, and I gave orders to start, though I had not the faintest idea how far we could get or where we were going to. We were moving away when N'Dale suddenly disappeared into a bush, from which he emerged carrying my rifle and cartridges, and with the sweetest smile the scoundrel then came running up and presented it to me. His face was so comic that both Van Staden and I burst out laughing, as we stopped to hear what he had to say. His tone was now altogether changed. He said he did not wish me to depart in anger ; that I was his brother, and welcome to everything he had, etc. ; and in the end he begged me to stay a few days with him.

As there was absolutely no possibility of doing anything else, I graciously consented, and he presently sent me down a goodwill offering in the shape of sweet potatoes and ground-nuts. During the two days we remained there, I wandered about the bush, but found few signs of game, as the natives kill most of it by means of carefully-hidden pits. Van Staden, who was still too weak to walk, went out on Brenke for a short time, and killed a fat koodoo cow, which was a perfect godsend, as we had no meat left.

Three days after this we found ourselves once more back at the Malala fountain, where we spent other two days hunting for roan antelope and Lichtenstein's hartebeests, but with no success. On the day of our arrival the two Randsbergs, who had been away over in the "fly" beyond Sabi, also came.

One of the brothers, nearly dead with fever, was lying under his waggon in a complete state of collapse, and I did all I could for him, but whether he recovered or not I never heard. They had been shooting hippopotami and prospecting as well. On the Silitsi and the Sabi they had killed six hippos, and had seen many elands in that country, but had been disappointed in the character of the country from a mineral and farming point of view. They seemed very good fellows, yet evidently regarded me with distrust, thinking I was a spy from the Chartered Company who wished to get them into trouble for shooting hippos, as these animals are preserved.

Provisions were now getting low, and as there was so little game about, we determined to return to the Nuanetsi, striking the river at the edge of the Flybelt, some sixty miles below our standing camp, and working up stream again, our hope being to find the big herd of buffaloes in the "fly" south of Matexe Mountain, and to get some further sport at these animals as well as waterbuck.

The Randsbergs preceded us, and though we had no little trouble in getting our miserable span along, in three days we struck the big river again. On the way I met Mr. G. H. M. Banks and his party coming out to hunt. A jolly, cheery specimen of an Englishman was he, and most kind and liberal in his offers of any necessaries I required. We sat down on the Veldt and had a good talk together, for I had had no home news for some months, and was right glad to meet with a friend from the old country. Mr. Banks eventually went on to the Malala fountain, where he had good sport when the game moved out of the "fly" in August. He was fortunate enough to get two lions, and several elands and sables there.

The character of the Nuanetsi where we struck it again was much the same as at our old camp, but perhaps even more beautiful, as we were now (20th July) under a fine hill known as Matexe Mountain. The spoor of game was plentiful and fresh, and the old man and I cherished great hope of finding the buffaloes on our first day, as none of the other hunters dare go into the "fly" with their valuable horses. Whilst sitting at breakfast a cock ostrich roared at no very great distance, so much like a lion that I can quite understand Livingstone's comparison between the two voices.

Those of my readers who are naturalists may be interested in the following description of the relative sounds which I endeavoured to write down phonetically on the spot :—

LION

Crescendo *Diminuendo*

Moan-ROAR-R-O-A-R-ROAR-Roar-roar-Grunt-grunt-grunt-grunt-grunt-grunt (dying away)

OSTRICH

(Not quite so loud, but at a distance exactly same tone as the lion)

Crescendo

ROAR-ROAR-ROAR-ROAR-R-R-R-R-R (prolonged)

The difference between the two is rather in power than in quality or sequence of sounds, the lion's roar being three times as strong as that of the ostrich. Their voices are often compared, to the disparagement of the lion, but that is because the lion very rarely roars his loudest. A man may hear lions roar every night for a month, and yet know nothing of what they can do when bent on a really fine vocal effort. I think Selous says that in all his long experience he could count on his fingers the number of times he heard lions roaring properly, whereas the ostrich always does his best.

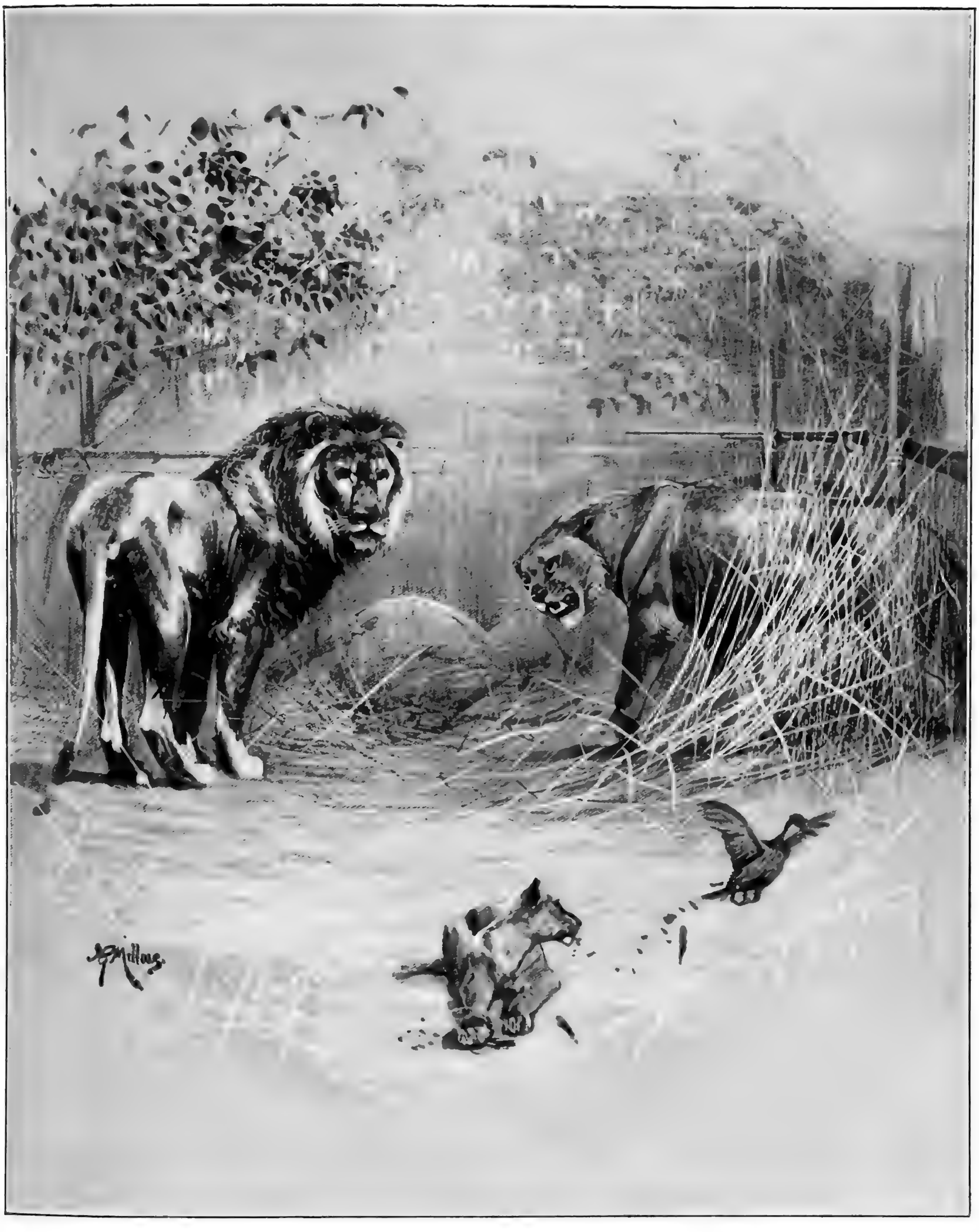
The lion too is something of a ventriloquist, being able to make his voice sound quite far away when he is comparatively near. When he does let himself go, there is no sound in the world to touch it. One night, on my return to the standing camp, I had the good fortune to listen to three lions, which came up the bed of the river and passed close by me, roaring at intervals in the most magnificent style.

In sporting books the lion is commonly portrayed in the attitude of roaring—with his head well up in the air, like a stag; but this is a mistake. Nearly all deer put the head up in the air, stretch the neck, and let the horns touch the back whilst roaring, while buffaloes of all sorts depress the neck and raise the muzzle as they bellow. But the lion, if closely watched, will be seen to emit his first moan in any position, and then draw his neck in and lower his head, with extended jaws, right down between his fore paws, as if about to be violently sick, whilst at the same time the back is arched, and the whole animal bears an appearance of concentrated strain. It is a position both undignified and ugly, but it is the true one for a lion doing a proper roar in a standing position. When roaring lying down, however, the lion always puts his head right up, like a dog barking. I give little sketches of the real attitudes, at the risk of destroying some of the romance with which my readers may have surrounded the king of beasts, as he makes the earth and all that therein is tremble beneath him.

On the road to the Nuanetsi I was lying half asleep under a tree, while

Brenke fed on some sweet grass close by, when one of those remarkable little birds, the honey-guide, came into the branches overhead and was most persistent in his demands that I should follow him, and he would show me some honey. But I was far too lazy to move, for the day was hot and I knew all about his interesting little ways, having on two previous occasions taken honey from trees to which the bird had led me. Otherwise I should certainly have gone, for I have never seen greater tameness and persistency than that displayed by the bird on this occasion. He kept flying away for short distances and then returning, in evident distress that I was not following him. Each time he returned he came closer and closer to me, and chattered louder and louder, till at last he was within 5 feet of my head. Though sorry for his distress, the sincerity of which I could not doubt, I reflected that the honey he would lead me to might be only poor and watery; so I just lay and watched him till Van Staden and the donkeys came up.

The rhinoceros-bird and the honey-guide (or, as the Dutch call him, "Honung vogel") are the most interesting birds the traveller encounters. The marvellous reasoning power of the latter seems to demand some better word than instinct. As its name implies, it is excessively fond of honey, but as it cannot extract it from the holes in trees where he knows it to be, he calls man to his assistance to dig it out for him. Mentally marking every nest of bees in a certain locality, he hangs around till he meets with a friendly biped, to whom he makes known his presence and his desire by a pleasant chuckling note. This he keeps up incessantly as long as the man is in view. Then after a short undulating flight of about 100 yards, he generally alights on a dead bough, so as to make himself as conspicuous as possible, and loudly continues his chuckling. If not attended to, he returns again and again with increasing audacity, as I have previously described; but if followed he waits till the man comes within fifty yards, and then continues his flights, which vary from 100 to 200 yards, till the nearest nest is discovered. There is pretty sure to be a dead bough about, or the bees would not be there; and on this he settles with his eyes towards the bees' nest. Or, if this hint be not sufficient, he will go and perch himself in the mouth of the hole, so that the greatest blockhead in the country cannot fail to find it. Piet Landsberg, who was fond of honey and liked running after these birds, found no less than four bees' nests in a short time—all shown to him by one bird. The nest is generally plastered up with mud and not very difficult to extract; and while you are engaged in this operation the honey-guide sits quietly on the tree, trusting to your honour

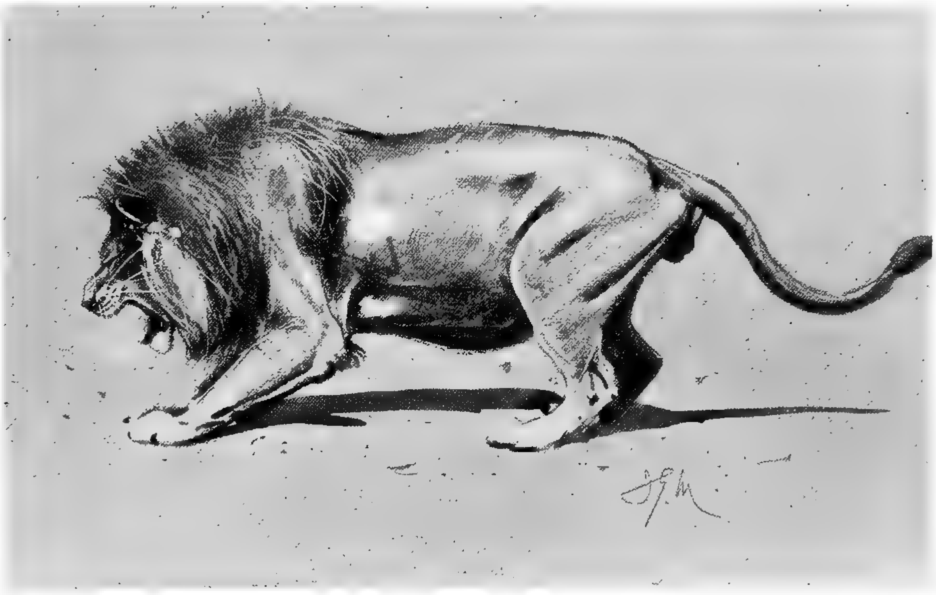


LIONS GOING TO A "STILL"

(The rifles are placed high so that the reader may see their position.)

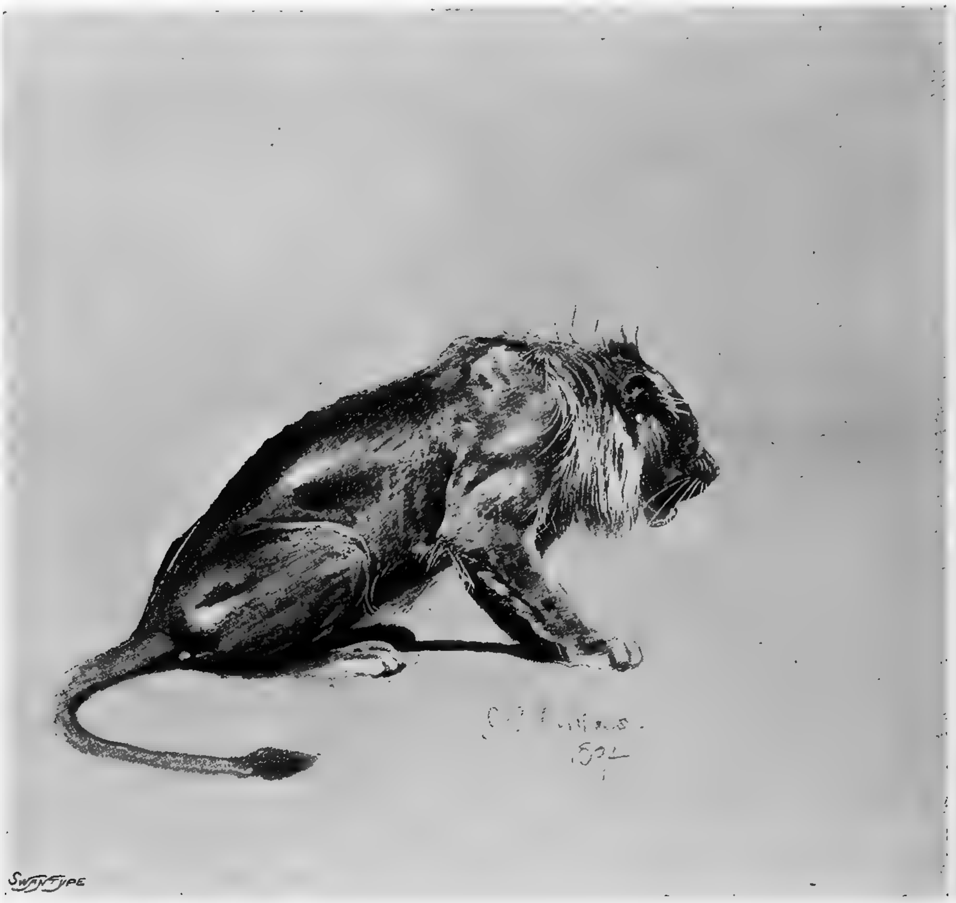
to give him a share of the plunder, which I need hardly say is always done by the natives.

One day as we were by the Lundi Mountains I saw a Shangan boy of about twelve years of age following a honey-guide; and a very pretty sight it was. The boy trotted along before us while keeping up a sort of monotonous chant —an improvised eulogy, as I learnt from Office—in which he warbled sweet praise and encouragement to the little bird as it fled before him. He blessed the whole of the honey-guide's relations and then the bird itself, and hoped he would show him a nice nest where the honey was good and sweet, and where no water had got in to spoil the contents. In the small sketch I give of the boy running after the bird, the dotted line is intended to indicate the line of flight and the resting-places of the honey-guide.



USUAL ATTITUDE OF A LION ROARING IN A STANDING POSITION

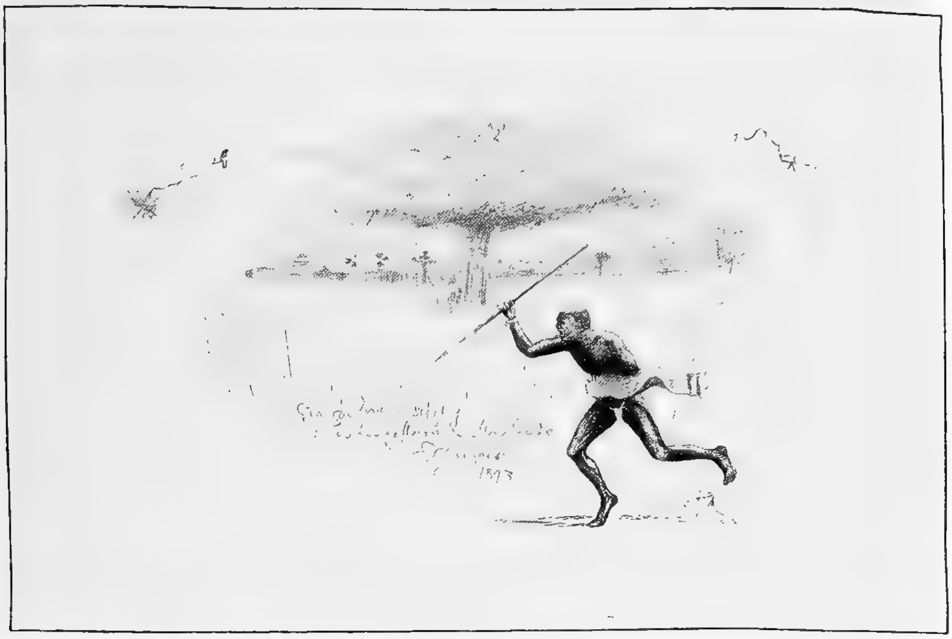
Our first days on coming back to the river were the hardest I ever spent. Van Staden and I determined to go as far as we could down the stream into the "fly," and prospect for the herd of buffaloes. We started about an hour before daybreak, and walked and rode alternately, with only one pony between us, till eleven o'clock at night. About five miles below the Matexe Mountains the river was exceedingly beautiful, but not so the tsetse flies, several of which we caught on Brenke's quarters. On the way some small troops of pallah (all very tame) crossed our path, and I shot one, missing two others that I ought to have got. We saw also before mid-day a troop of Roi Rhebuck on the hill-side, and three koodoo cows. Then—about two in the afternoon—we struck the spoor of the big buffalo herd, which were evidently trekking. Under some hills, Clas said, was a half-dried watercourse where they might have gone; so we followed the spoor for about three miles, coming at length to some large pools where the animals had obviously stayed for several days. On then again, following the spoor to the base of some mountains, where we finally gave up the pursuit, satisfied that the buffaloes had crossed right over the mountains, and were heading for the lower part of the Bubye.



A LION ROARING, SITTING DOWN

We now turned homewards with a long journey before us; and in following up the watercourse a fine waterbuck ram sprang up within a few yards of us. Both Van Staden and I hit him badly as he went slowly away, and ultimately bagged him without difficulty; but this necessitated a considerable delay, and it was evening before we again reached the foot of Matexe

Mountain. Dead beat—for we had taken but little rest during the day—we sat down on the side of the hill to enjoy the beautiful landscape for a while, and while I was watching the humorous manœuvres of some baboons on the crest above us, Van Staden discovered a troop of koodoo descending the slope to our left, and evidently going down for their evening drink. There were five cows and a young bull, and as they were not more than 300 yards off, and we were well above them, I had a fine opportunity for observing their graceful and watchful manœuvres as they timidly advanced. Fortunately none of them turned to look back, and what little wind there was blew from them to us; otherwise we must have been seen, as the koodoo's powers of scent and hearing are far keener than those of any of the other Bush antelopes. They advanced slowly and with great caution, stopping every thirty or forty yards, and straining their beautiful eyes and ears to detect the slightest suspicious sign or sound. I noticed particularly how very stiff they keep the fore-legs when in slow motion, and how each leg is in turn planted with evident jar to the shoulder, so unlike the more graceful movement of deer, which bend the knee and fetlock joints freely. We could not eat the waterbuck we had shot, so Van Staden and I tried to approach the herd unnoticed,



SHANGAN NATIVE SINGING TO AND PRAISING THE HONEY-GUIDE AS HE IS LED BY THE BIRD TO A BEES' NEST
(The dotted line shows the short flight of the bird.)

which we did with fair success. Van Staden took the shot, as I did not care about it, and I thought he was more likely to be successful. He missed, however, and so did I; but at a fortunate turn the animals became confused, and my companion made a very lucky and pretty shot, breaking the neck of a big cow.

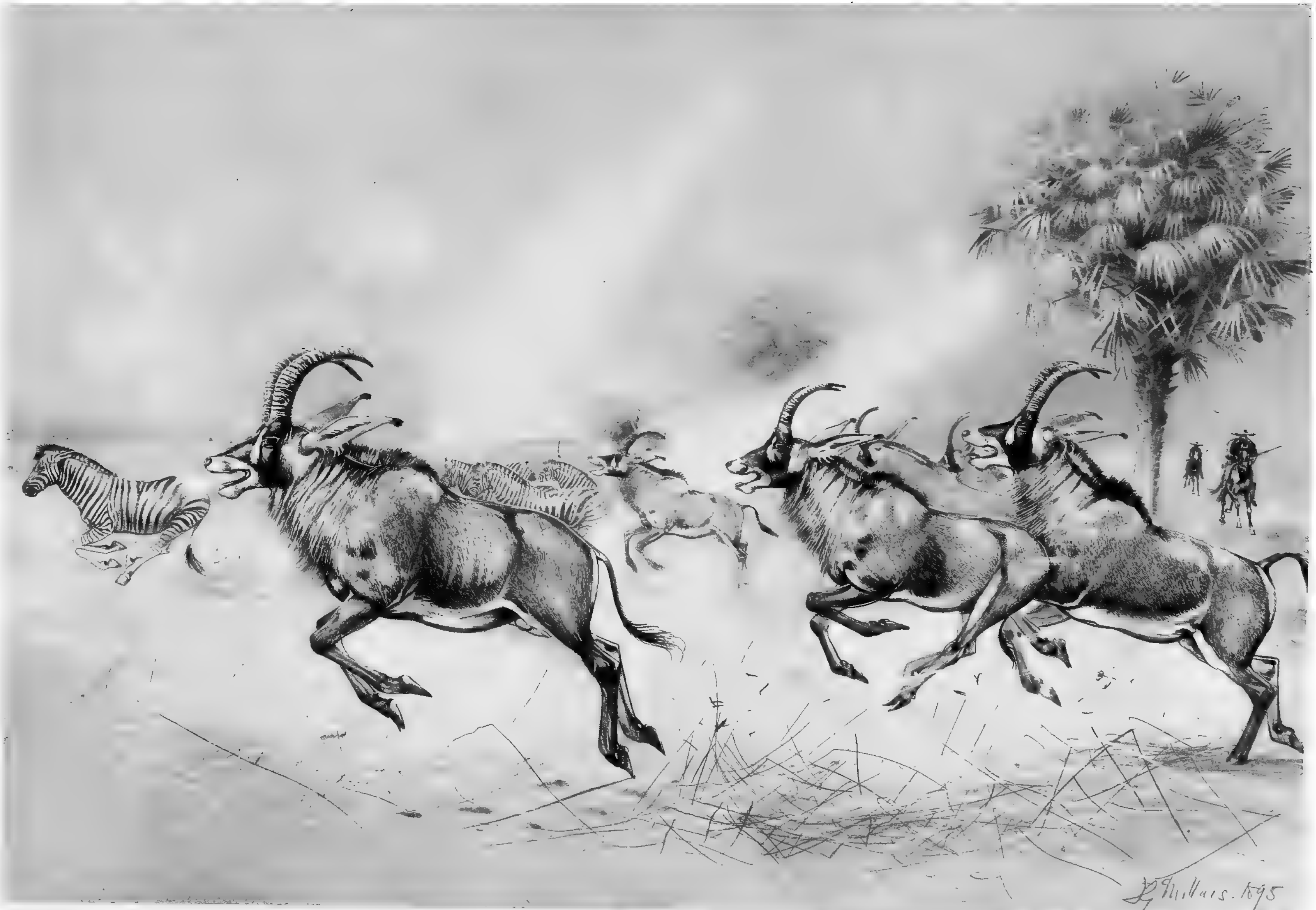
Brenke was now pretty well laden with the pallah and waterbuck heads and koodoo meat, and we reached camp very late and completely fagged out. Though we could not complain of our day's sport, I must confess to a feeling of disappointment at not seeing more of the buffaloes; still I cherished a hope that they might possibly have returned to the vicinity of our old camp up the river, for we could not follow down the river any further, owing to the donkeys and lack of provisions.

The following day a strange coincidence happened. Randsberg, hunting out about fifteen miles away in the direction of the spruit where I had the long chase after the roans, had noticed some vultures collecting round what was evidently a dead carcase; and riding up, had found the body of a big roan antelope cow which had been dead only about a day. He had brought the skin back with him, as it was not much damaged; and, to my great surprise, I recognised the small bullet-hole made in it by my small ·400 express, which I had been using the day I had fallen in with the animals. There could not be the smallest doubt that it was the same cow that I lost when Brenke gave out, as no one but myself would have used so small a rifle as that which I carried that evening in the expectation of finding reedbuck.

During the two following days we had no luck; but Randsberg, who was a first-rate shot, killed no less than three waterbuck rams, two koodoos, and a pallah.

The Nuanetsi may be described as the perfect home of the waterbuck; even to-day they are the commonest antelopes near the river. In life this buck has a very noble and imposing presence; he carries his head high in the air, and his long, strong horns and rough neck and hide impart a wild and game look to his general appearance. When seen on the Veldt, the shortness of his legs and his general thick-set look may perhaps suggest the idea that he is a poor mover; but he is nothing of the sort. In really rough and bad ground he can beat any Basuto pony, for he seems to be quite indifferent to the nature of the country over which he chooses to travel.

Taken all round, the waterbuck has the largest geographical range of any of the antelopes in Africa. Though commonly classed under no less than four


J G Millais. 1895

Swan Electric Engraving Co.

Roan Antelopes "done brown."

distinct titles, the species is really the same throughout the length and breadth of Africa, individuals differing only in slight external markings and colour of hair. What is known as the sing-sing in West Africa grows to nearly as fine an animal as its southern form, but seldom carries so good a head. In East Africa both forms are found—the dark brown grey with a bright white rump-mark, and the pale brownish-yellow sing-sing with a faint ring, which is, moreover, incomplete. Unless disturbed, waterbuck never move far from the river or spruit which they are accustomed to frequent. In the early hours of the day and evening, they are generally to be found in small herds, on the banks where trees and bush are plentiful, the troops commonly consisting of one old ram and from ten to thirty ewes.

While feeding, the ewes keep constant guard against surprise, raising their heads very frequently, and quickly moving their ears forward one after the other. Most antelopes cock both ears together and gaze for some time in one direction ; but waterbuck never stare at any point for long, unless they have already observed the approach of an enemy. Their ears are in constant play backward and forward, and their eyes are equally on the alert. Where the troops have been disturbed they will travel very considerable distances from the water ; old rams, indeed, will wander away nearly as far as koodoo bulls, and only come at night to drink, retreating far into the waterless country during the day. This, however, is not their natural habit ; they love the rivers, and will always stay there as long as they can with safety. And here I may notice a point on which nearly every writer who mentions the waterbuck insists—that, when pursued, it always heads towards the water. That, I think, is a mistake. They do so, I daresay, pretty often when found at a considerable distance from the river, but (according to my experience) when encountered close to their favourite element they nearly always head right away from it, as the reedbuck does. On three occasions my companion and I found waterbucks far out on the Veldt, and on two of these they certainly did not head towards the nearest water.

Like pallah, if they have not been much harassed, waterbuck are loath to take serious alarm. A hunter will often run right up into the midst of a troop after they have made their first short run and then stopped. Under such circumstances they seem to be quite bewildered ; and if the hunter is shooting for the pot, he will get several good chances—from the ewes at any rate. When galloping, waterbuck string out in single file with a big interval between every member of the herd, and get over the ground at a very good pace—that is to say, over rough ground—while on smooth, good-going veldt, should the hunter be lucky enough to encounter a troop, he will find that for a mile or so they can go it right handsomely, *malgré* their short legs and heavy bodies. The horns of a ram in his prime are very fine, measuring on an average about 27 inches; they are graceful in shape, light in colour, and beautifully annulated. I fancy that after a certain age the buck rubs and wears his horns to a very great extent, as the majority of old rams one sees have very short, thick, stunted horns. The best heads are always those that are only just adult, and whose bases are still slightly soft and full of blood.

While sitting at breakfast the following morning I saw some illustrations of ant history that would have delighted the heart of Sir John Lubbock. One of the Randsbergs had kindly given me a large slab of hippopotamus flank, the fat of which is quite delicious; but a little of it goes a long way, and you can only eat the inside portion, which is soft and delicate. I had thrown away a large piece, and was lazily smoking my pipe and thinking over the events of the previous days, when I noticed that the fat I had discarded was being gradually covered by small red ants about the size of a pin's head; so I determined to watch them. And now I observed six great black ants—the largest I have ever seen—walking solemnly round and round the fat, and stopping every minute, apparently to pick up something and rub their fore-legs together. At first I thought they were consuming the small drippings that had come from the pot, but on closer inspection I found that they were by no means so innocently employed. In fact, they were catching and gobbling up their small red *confrères*, who in turn inflicted upon them all the damage they could possibly commit. It was a most interesting sight, and the old man, Prince, and I lay on the ground and watched the performance for half an hour.

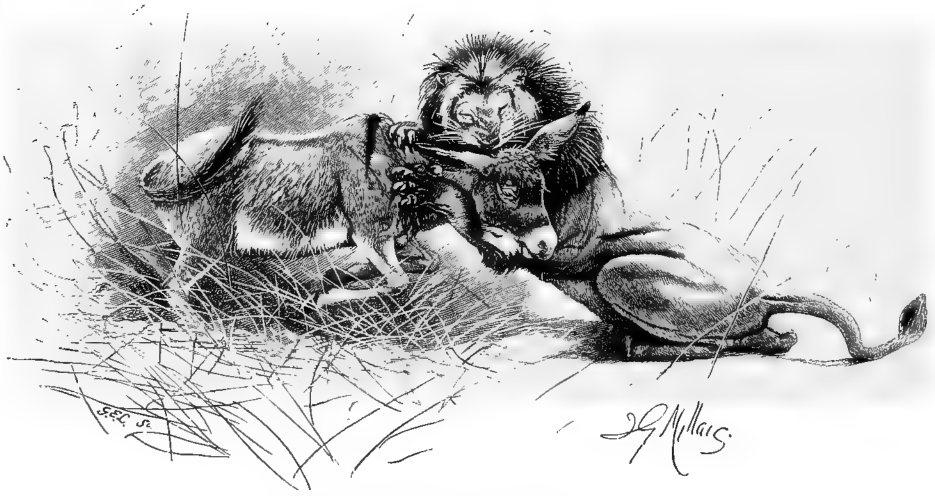
As a rule, whenever a black ant seized a red one, and—holding it in his fore-legs across his mouth—commenced tearing it to pieces with his powerful nippers, he was immediately attacked on all sides by the victim's friends. Their attack was always on the two fore-legs and the end of what is known as the *metathorax;* and the way those plucky little fellows went for the giant was really splendid. Three or four at a time would fasten on his fore-legs and bite so furiously that you could see their little bodies strain with the effort. If the big ant had his mouth full, all he could do was to rub his legs together, and try to force his tormentors off by means of his other legs. Then, or whenever the little ants failed to release their comrade, they attacked and bit the enemy's tail, which was evidently his most tender part; and many a time he would have to drop his dead or dying victim, to relieve himself from their torments. Sometimes—indeed far too often—the poor little red ant had no friends to help him, and then he was quickly disposed of. The hinder portion of the insect is all that is devoured. An ant's appetite and digestion must be first-class, for I saw one of them devour no less than five of the smaller sort before he was attacked and beaten off for a time. In one case where a battle was protracted, and the combatants evenly matched, I got quite excited, and seizing a large sheet of white paper, I slipped it under the insects the better to see them. They did not seem to mind this in the least, but went on with their fight; and I had thus a perfect view of their movements. The big ant's attitudes as he wrung his sore legs and antennæ after being temporarily worsted were almost human to look at. So fertile and interesting is Africa in its entomology alone, that even though I am not a "bug-and-beetle" man myself, I could well devote a chapter to the strange doings of insects that I casually noticed without paying much attention to them.

Two days later I was fortunate enough to see another sight that would have delighted any lover of nature, whether specialist or otherwise. As we were trekking up by the side of the river we suddenly came on a great army of black ants on the march. From a military point of view, the movement was simply perfect—so perfect, indeed, and so unlike anything one would expect to find in the insect world, that readers who have not done their Lubbock or gone in for watching ants abroad or at home may think me guilty of a hunter's yarn as I relate what I actually saw. We encountered the column about mid-day, when they were doubtless changing their ground to some more suitable locality, and being much interested, I stopped the waggon and for several minutes watched the army on the move. It was about as like a regiment on the march as anything could possibly be. As nearly as I could estimate the number, there were about two or three thousand big ants, and all were formed into "fours," though (in military phrase) the fours did not keep their "dressing." The outside members of each four never moved from their position, but the insiders kept constantly changing places across the column. If at any moment they were more than four deep, it was only for an instant while crossing a rough place. They moved along like a huge black serpent, and were led by a single ant, who examined the ground like a scout, while the column implicitly followed all his movements and (apparently) his directions. Indeed, so far as I could see, they did everything that soldiers do, except swear and smoke; and as to swearing, they may have done that for aught I know.

Out of curiosity, I picked up the leader ant and chucked him away. This was mean, but I wanted to see what they would do. There was no confusion, but the column instantly came to a halt, whilst those in the rear kept moving about without leaving the ranks—anxious, no doubt, to see what was the matter. In less time than it takes to tell it, another ant came out of the ranks and took up the position of leader, when the army at once continued on its march. I did not notice it the first time, but as I removed the pioneer four times, I saw it on the second and subsequent occasions. At last I knelt down close to the insects, bagged their leader, and stirred up the front ranks with a stick to see what would happen then. Immediately several of the ants came out as if to attack me, holding their heads in the air with their formidable nippers extended, and raising their hinder parts straight up, after the fashion of the beetle known in this country as the Devil's Coach-horse, an insect which most of my readers will have seen. And now, having given them as much worry as was good for them, I bid the army good-bye and proceeded on my journey.

Nothing of interest occurred during our two days' trek up the river to the old camp save some whirlwinds, which came within a few yards of us as we were on the move. In the heat of the day, when the air all around is absolutely still, these phenomena of nature are curious to witness, the winds as they swirl round and round being sometimes so strong as to break the smaller twigs and branches of the trees.

On the evening of 22nd July we saw a solitary horseman on a white pony advancing towards us, and recognised Teenie Landsberg, who was quite overjoyed at seeing us again, as he had made up his mind that we were lost for good. We of course had much to tell each other, and were presently once again back in our old camp discussing koodoo marrow-bones and some of the few luxuries we had left behind—a very pleasurable treat after our long tramp.



HOW THE LION KILLS

CHAPTER IX

We were right glad to see Teenie again, for the old man and I had had a hard time of it lately, and looked forward to a rest and such few luxuries as my waggon could afford ; but our joy seemed nothing to that of Teenie, who, ever alive to the gloomy side of things, had quite given us up in despair, and tormented himself accordingly. His was not a nature to stand the many small disappointments and worries that fall to the lot of every traveller. He cared nothing for sport, and was never happy unless his oxen were in perfect safety and had abundance of good grass and water ; and being of a highly nervous and excitable temperament, one could never rely upon him when any real difficulty had to be faced. If the fly had not already stung the best of his cattle, the lions would be sure to pick them off. Such was his cheerful creed. And now, having been left practically alone with his younger brother and Tace, with whom he was not on particularly friendly terms, he had daily and nightly been in a state of "jumps" for the past month—a condition of mind which plainly betrayed itself in his face when our first greetings were over. The lions, he told us, had been round the camp almost every night since our departure, and were only kept off by the lighting of big fires and the construction of a huge scherm. But that something more serious than that had happened was evident from the increasing gravity of his manner. Perhaps his brother or Tace had come to an untimely end ? That was my first thought, as I pressed him to tell me the worst without more ado. Then out it came. My favourite horse "Jimmy," to whom I was much attached, and Piet's stallion "Lively" had gone out to feed one afternoon, according to custom, and both animals had returned to camp together at sunset with their heads swollen out of all recognition. They had been bitten by a viper, and with the natural instinct of horses, had returned to camp at once. Piet, who saw his horse (to him an animal of great value) dying slowly before his eyes, was in great distress, and he and Teenie tried every means to alleviate the sufferings of the poor creatures, but to no purpose: before midnight they both lay dead. I say nothing of my own loss, for though Jimmy was a most admirable little mount in the bush, following the game, as many of these South African horses will, by sight alone on the smallest pressure of the rider's knees, I still had my two Basuto ponies, which were now becoming useful. But to Piet the loss of Lively meant a very great deal; he was the only horse he possessed, a fine animal too, and being thoroughly "salted" and well trained, was worth a good round sum. On the death of the two horses Teenie dragged them under the trees about 100 yards from the camp, where the lions visited them nightly, till there was nothing left but the bones. In the camp they heard distinctly the growling and snarling of the marauders; and yet Tace, who liked to parade himself as an old Veldtsman, never dreamt of making a "still," much less of watching for the lions, with intent to kill, from a tree above the carcases. He was, in fact, but a poor-spirited creature, with no more "go" in him than a wood-louse, and according to all accounts, he had spent most of his time during our absence in grumbling and quarrelling with the others. It was very mean of his father,

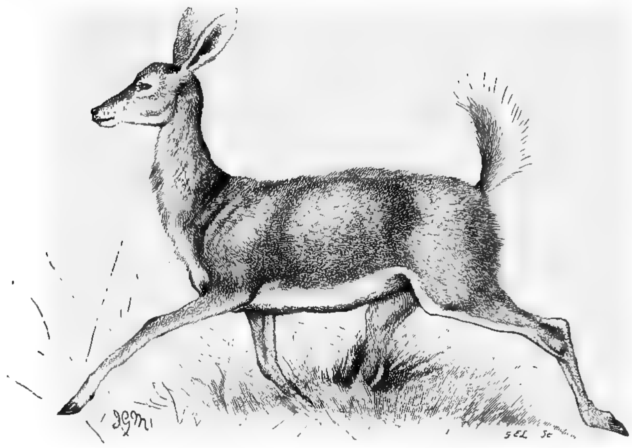
THE RECORD KOODOO HORNS

Span, 49½ in.; length on curve, 63; length, straight line, 48½. Shot by Sydney Osborn.

he said, to leave him all alone in the Veldt, and he would tell his mother what he thought about it when he returned home. To Englishmen, the idea of a big hulking fellow of five and twenty behaving like a petulant child, is decidedly comic ; but amongst the Boers this kind of thing is common enough. The Boer at his best is a good fellow fairly comparable with a well-bred Englishman, but too many of them are sulky, quarrelsome, and childish ; and of these two types I doubt if better examples could be found than Oom Roelef and his step-son—the former one of Nature's gentlemen, the latter a conceited and ignorant lout.

As we had anticipated, Piet and Tace had good sport during our absence, for the game had been gradually drawing in to the big river, under the attractions of the sweet young grass which had been springing up of late on the charred and burnt lands. Several waterbuck, pallah, and koodoo had fallen to their rifles, the last named including three fine old bulls. Piet, whose first year it was in the hunting veldt, had done remarkably well, killing the majority of the animals, and amongst other creatures, the finest leopard I have ever seen. I am sorry I did not take the exact measurements, for he was an immense brute and in splendid coat. Piet had had quite a little adventure with him. He came upon him one evening close to camp ; and getting an easy chance, the animal fell to his shot at once. On approaching, however, the apparently dead beast suddenly recovered and charged for a short distance ; but owing to the nature of the wound, which was high and far back, he was compelled to stop for a moment, when another bullet in his chest left him nothing more to wish for. Another day—also close to camp—Piet encountered five lions, but on his approach they made off rapidly towards the long grass by the river. A lioness, however, stood for a moment and gave him a fair chance, which Piet, who is an excellent shot, ought, as he admitted, to have made more of. She was apparently hit low and far back (a great deal of blood coming from her), and he and Tace followed her spoor till they heard some most emphatic expressions of anger proceeding from the long grass. Having no suitable dogs, and no desire to distinguish themselves like the heroes of sporting novels, they wisely left the irate lady alone, cursing the thick bush that cost poor Piet the loss of his first lion—a lion that, in the open forest and with a horse under him, he would in all probability have bagged. He was very lucky, however, in coming across game ; and on another occasion a fine lion appeared standing under a malala tree, but though he made for it with the haste of a running footman, the lack of a horse prevented his getting within shot.

By far the most interesting thing to me on my return to the old camp was the skin of a bushbuck ewe which Piet had shot. This animal, and a buck killed by Tace two or three days after our return, showed beyond question a connecting link between the old colony bushbuck and the harness bushbuck of the Chobe that Selous describes as a distinct species. It is a vexed question amongst zoologists as to what actually constitutes a distinct and separate species. Amongst African mammals, for instance—notably the waterbucks, the pallahs, and the bushbucks—the same animal, with local variation of size and colour, is sometimes classified under five or six different species. Rightly too ; though why this racial distinction should be made between the harnessed bushbuck of the Chobe and his bigger brother in the South it is hard to say, in face of the fact that the striped and otherwise decorated eland of East Africa is commonly identified with his congener of Kalahari, a slightly larger animal of uniform colour unbroken by any particular markings.



ROI RHEBUCK EWE MOVING OFF

That the striped bushbuck of the Chobe is identically the same animal as its Southern congener I have not the smallest doubt. So far as I know, no specimens from eastern Mashonaland, where the connecting link occurs, have ever been exhibited to naturalists in this country, so I hope the sketch of the male on page 103 may be of some interest. The white stripes, though numerically the same as those of the Chobe form (that is to say, six on either side and along the dorsal ridge), as well as the spots on the lower part of the haunch, are not so clearly defined as in the Chobe ; nor in the specimens which I examined were there any of the white horizontal bars on the flank which are noticeable in the Northern form. Both the male and the female were much redder in the coat, and might be taken for large specimens of the harnessed bushbuck.[1] The bushbuck is of a shy and retiring disposition, and but seldom offers the rifle-shooter a chance. It is, moreover, one of the rarest of the smaller antelopes in northern and eastern Mashonaland, and it is therefore not surprising that so very few have ever been killed in these localities. The wooded banks of the Limpopo were formerly a favourite resort of this game little buck, and even to-day the species is not uncommon away from the regular waggon routes. Still there is no marked difference between bushbucks there and those farther south, and though at one time Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, the well-known hunter, sought to establish this new red species under the name of "Roualeyni," the claim was not considered to hold good.

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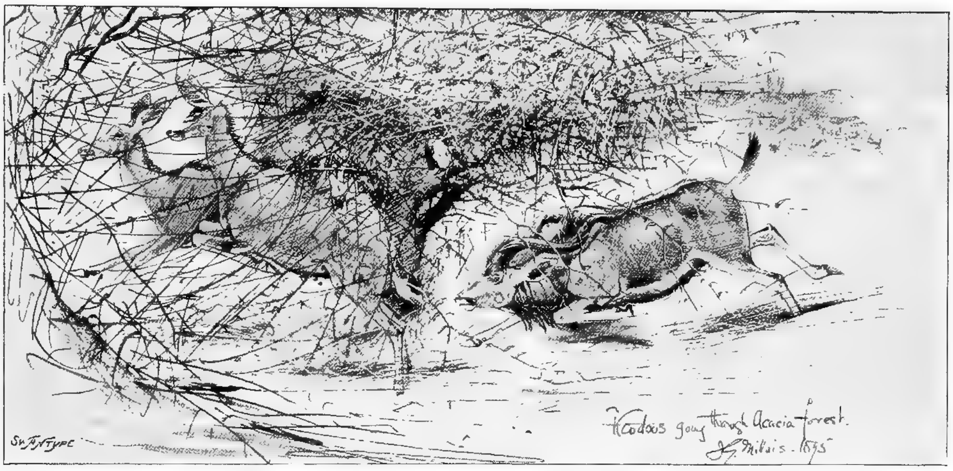
[1] This red-coated bushbuck seems to me to closely resemble the bushbuck of the Webbe Shabeleh (Somaliland) described by Captain Swayne.

As the traveller leaves the Limpopo and advances northward and eastward he will be much struck by the complete change in the soil, grass, trees, and general nature of the country which Mashonaland presents after the thick bush and broken character of Northern Transvaal. This change and the slightly accentuated warmth of the climate may, even at so short a distance north of the great river, have much to do with the slight alteration of coat in the bushbuck, for it is well known how greatly birds and animals are affected by the smallest difference in geological environment.

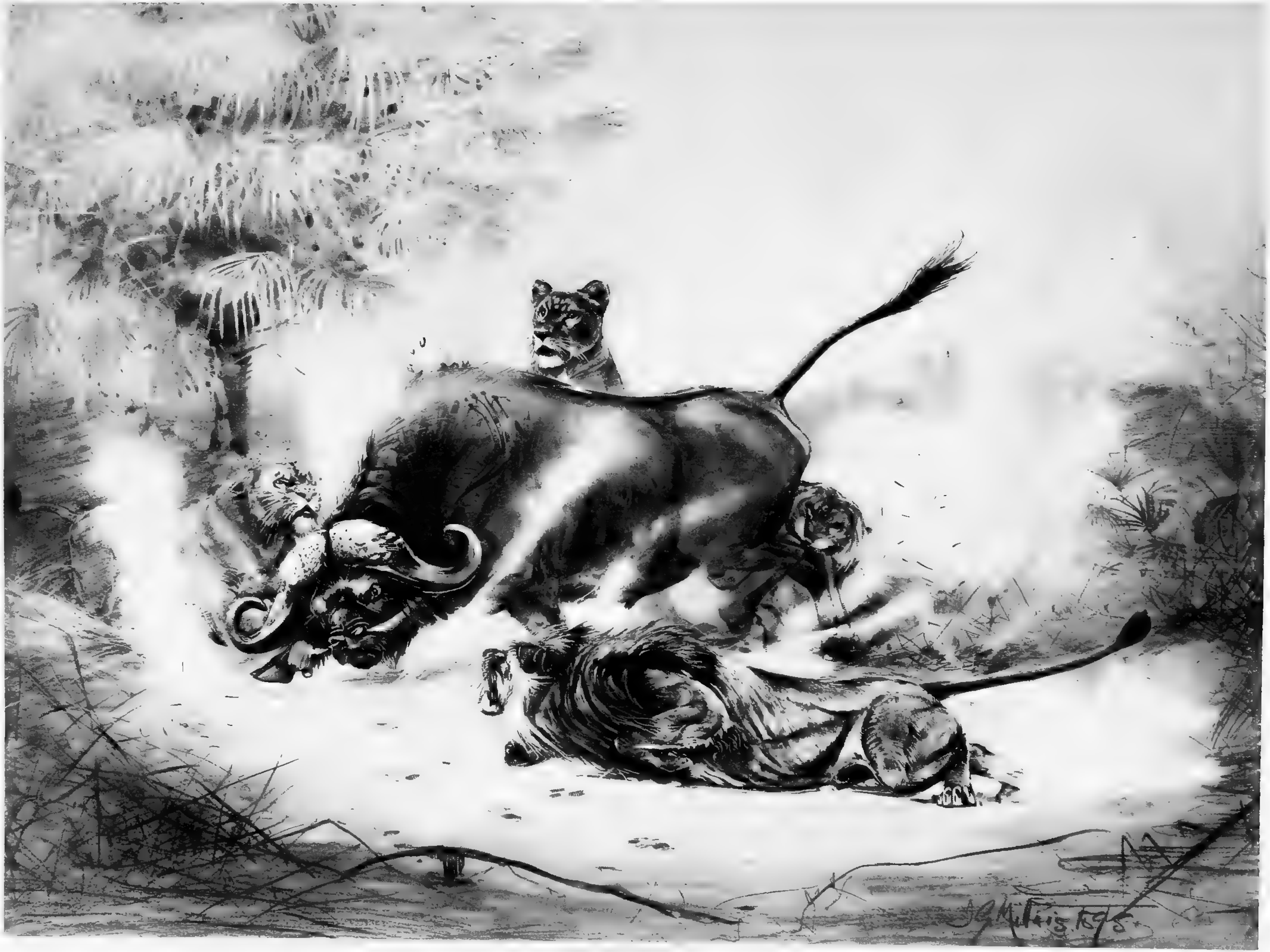

Koodoos going through Acacia forest.
J. G. Millais. 1895
SWANTYPE

KOODOOS GOING THROUGH ACACIA FOREST

The loss of my horse "Jimmy" was not the only disappointment which awaited me on my return. During the journey up country I had worked hard to obtain a good collection of the bustards and francolins of the country I passed through, shooting during the day and preserving the specimens at night. In a letter from Mr. Ogilvie Grant of the British Museum he had urged me to try and make such a collection, and at one time I flattered myself I had done rather well in that way, having filled a large box with about forty specimens. Great then was my chagrin to find on opening the box only a miserable mass of bones and feathers, that hateful little African beetle having got in and completely ruined my collection. Only one single bird (a female Vaal khoorhan) held together as I picked up the various specimens.

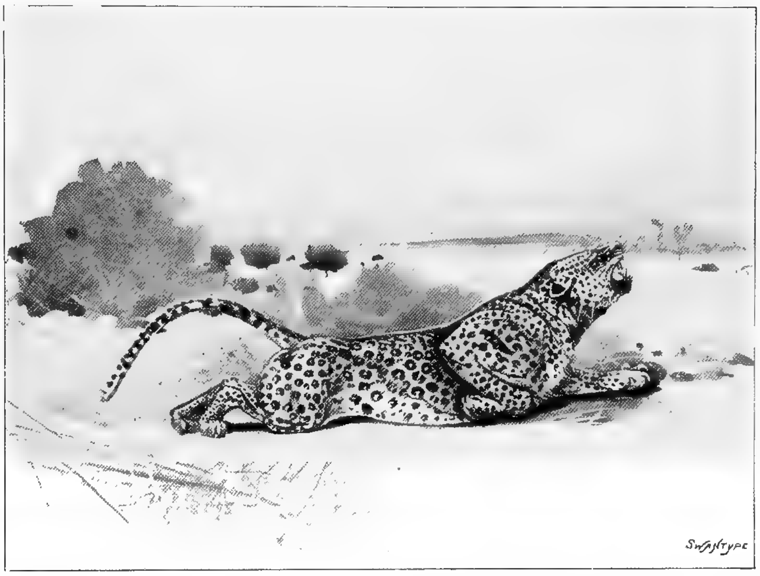
All who had been left behind in the camp spoke of the number of lions that had lately been frequenting this part of the river, and the disturbance they created at night by their moans and grunts ; and we had not to wait long for confirmation of their report. It was about eleven o'clock on the first night of our return, when from a point far away down the river came the sound of a troop of lions moving in our direction. The combined roars were emitted at intervals of every two minutes, and as they advanced up the sandy bed of the river their voices grew louder and louder, culminating at last as they came within a hundred yards of us in the most savage and awe-inspiring volume of sound one could possibly imagine. It is quite true, as Selous says, you may hear lions every night for a month and yet never hear them once roar properly, and that is why so many travellers have unjustly depreciated the voice of this animal. The fact is, they have never heard lions doing their best in concert, or they would not speak so lightly of the grandest and most impressive sound in creation.

Being anxious to obtain a good bushbuck ram, several of which Piet had seen at a point about a mile down the river, I determined to devote a day to hunting for them. When Piet saw them they always ran down a certain dry sluit and disappeared into the high grass and reeds fringing the banks of the river ; we therefore concluded they would be hiding there during the day. A nice cool breeze was blowing up the river as we all started the following morning, so I decided to take Office and Gentleman with me, and if possible to fire the reeds. As we were walking along the high bank, at a point where the cover below us was fairly open, a bushbuck ram suddenly sprang up and made its way at considerable speed through the tangled undergrowth. Every one had a shot at him, and all missed except Tace, who withheld his fire to the last. By a lucky and somewhat fluky shot he broke one of the buck's hind legs, on which the animal stopped, and was bagged without much difficulty. Elated at finding so early in the day the game we wished for, we went on for another half mile down the river, when Piet and Tace crossed to the farther bank, whilst the old man and I kept at intervals of from one to two hundred yards in front of the Kaffir boys who had set fire to the reeds on both sides of the river. Everything seemed to go swimmingly, but not another bushbuck did we see that day. The wind kept steady till the afternoon, and more than a mile of


J G Millais 95

Lions attacking and hamstringing a Buffalo

cover was burnt down, but nothing of interest turned up till near sunset, when, on raising myself from the ground, where I had been lying smoking, with one eye on the cover below me, the movement of something in a patch of reeds in the middle of the sand attracted my attention. Nothing followed, however ; so after waiting a while I began to think I was mistaken, and was about to leave my post when a leopard quietly walked out on to the sand, and stood looking over his shoulder at the smoke and fire moving towards him. He was not more than sixty yards off when I fired, and I ought to have struck him in a better place than the stomach, where my bullet caught him. These cats, however, are soft, and a bullet gives them a far greater shock than it would a small antelope ; so Mr. Spotty lay down and squirmed, giving me time to jam in another cartridge. Oom Roelef, who was behind some bushes when I fired, now ran up, and firing at the same moment with myself as the leopard began crawling away over the sand, one of the bullets at any rate went true, passing through the top of the skull and out at the ear, and carrying instantaneous death ; whose bullet it was did not matter, and if it did neither of us could possibly tell. It was not a particularly fine specimen of the leopard ; but his skin was nicely spotted, and I noticed with interest how completely the colouring of his coat blended with the surrounding objects as the sun shone upon him. To the casual observer at home no skins are so brilliant as those of the zebra and leopard, yet in no instance has Nature been so happy in her



A DYING LEOPARD

choice of colours for natural protection as in these two animals. A zebra or a leopard standing or lying on the straw-coloured grass, and surrounded by shadows and dark mimosas, is about as difficult an object for the hunter to detect quickly as any I know. As this was the only leopard I have ever seen at large, I need hardly trouble my readers with any remarks on the habits of the beast.

Previous to our departure for the "fly," Oom Roelef and I made several attempts to discover a certain half-dry watercourse by which a year ago my companion had found numerous antelope, both sable and roan. But somehow or other he missed his line this year, and we saw only one old sable bull, which was evidently not near this sluit, though it must have watered there regularly. Two days before our return, however, Tace, who had been hunting some eight miles eastward, rediscovered the sluit, in which there was a little water, and along its margin much fresh spoor of roan antelope. I was feeling rather seedy with the premonitory headache of a fever attack, and ought to have lain by for a day ; but as our time was getting short I determined to lose no opportunity for obtaining a roan bull—an animal I much wished to possess. So, under the guidance of Tace, we set off at daybreak, bent on a good hunt for the big antelopes ; and as our adventures, with its varying successes and disappointments, were characteristic of what may be called a regular hunter's day, I will try to describe some of its incidents in detail.

We crossed the river as the sun was rising, disturbing a mass of vultures at their bathing pool ; and, leading our horses up the steep bank on the farther side, soon left the river and its great trees, under which were the dried wallows of the buffaloes and wart-hogs. The first to attract our attention was a lot of baboons, which quickly fled from us ; then came an old wart-hog sow, who stood and looked at us from the shade of a spreading mimosa ; and later on a beautiful grysbuck made its appearance. The little antelope was climbing down the side of an old sluit, and against the dark background it was difficult to see to what sex it belonged. However, on my dismounting to take the shot, some movement on the part of the horses attracted its attention, and it quickly disappeared. After this a ride of about three hours brought us to the high bank of a watercourse said by Tace to lead eventually to the ground we were making for, when, on looking upwards, I saw four rhinoceros birds flying to our right, and converging in their descent towards some common object. I was about to remark upon this, when Tace, who was leading, stopped his horse, and saying quietly "Zwart-vit-pens" (sable antelope), slid from the saddle. I had my eye still on the birds, and seeing them alight on the back of what looked like a sable cow about 150 yards away, I signed to Tace to take a shot, which he accordingly did. The bullet struck the ground at the animal's feet, sending up a cloud of dust and causing it to turn sideways, and show us, instead of an insignificant cow, a remarkably fine bull. This entirely altered my interest in the proceeding; and I was quickly down the steep bank and into the sluit before either of my companions had remounted. On reaching the bottom it was most disappointing to find there was no possibility of ascending the farther bank, so I rattled Brenke up the dry bed in a line parallel to that taken by the sable, and towards a point where the bank seemed to shelve downwards. But here again I was baulked of my intent, and obliged to continue along the line of the sluit for several hundred yards till an exit presented itself. This, as it turned out, was most fortunate for me; for on topping the bank I saw the head

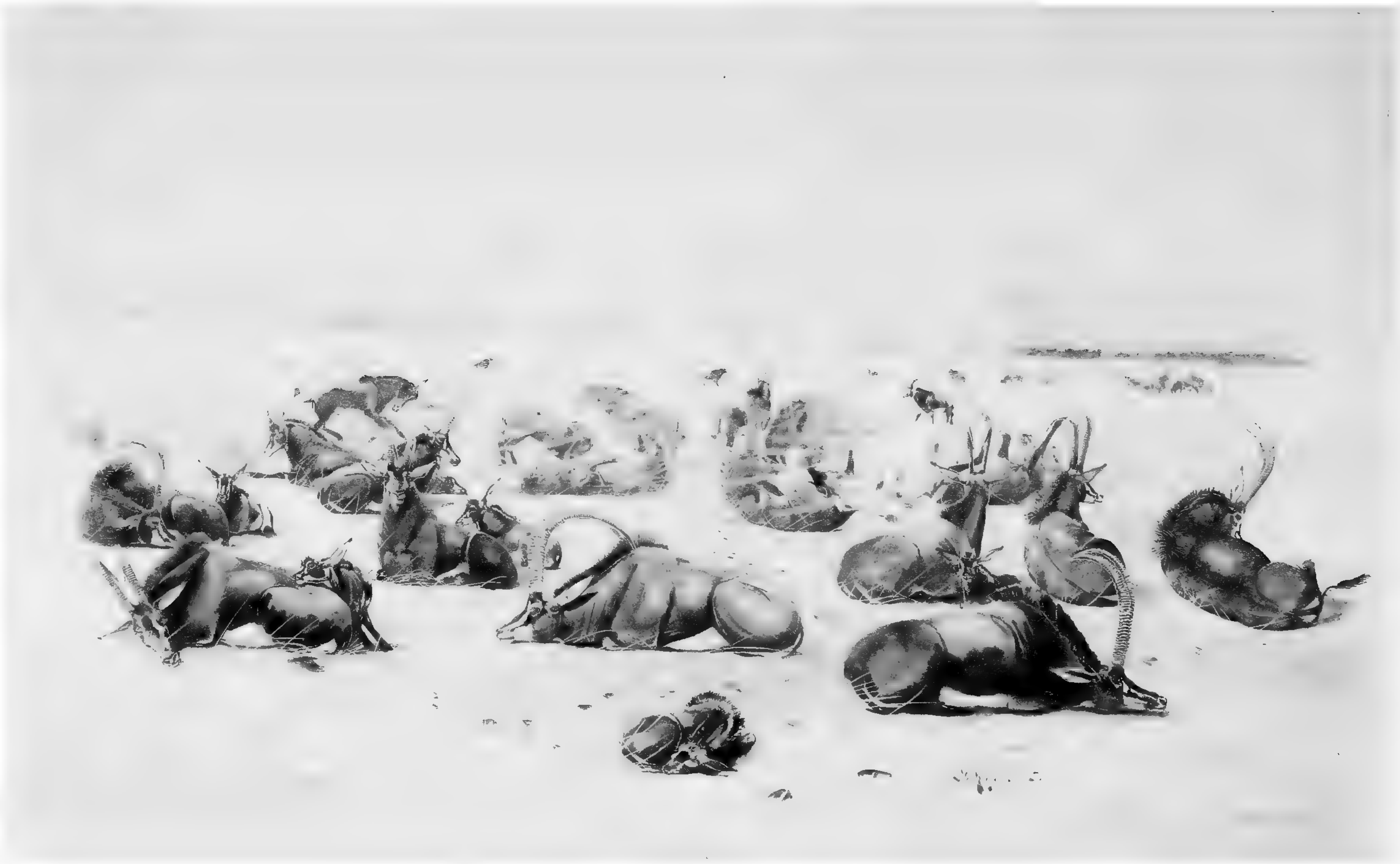
André & Sleigh

SABLE ANTELOPES' HEADS

and horns of a grand sable, looking straight at me within thirty yards. Such a chance was not to be lost. In a moment I slid off the pony, and for once the good little beast stopped quietly by my side as I took the shot. The sable gave a puffing snort (as they always do on being hit) and half fell on his knees ; but quickly recovering, he made off at a canter just as my companions came galloping up, for they had crossed at a point farther down, and now passed me in hot pursuit. Mounting again at once, I followed in their wake, just arriving in time to see Tace off his horse and about to shoot, the sable lying before him up against a great ant-heap. The grand beast, shaking his noble head, looked as only a sable can, ready to receive his *coup de grâce* with a defiant air. My bullet had broken his left shoulder very far forward—a bad shot, though that did not trouble me much at the time, as I had got a trophy really worth having ; indeed so fine a sable head is rarely seen, and Rowland Ward and Co., who have admirably mounted it, say it is the best that has ever passed through their hands. The head, though 45¼ inches long, is, strange to say, not that of an adult animal. The horns would, I believe, have grown another 3 or 4 inches had its life been spared. A sportsman examining a number of heads of the sable, will notice that in the horns of adult animals there is a space of from 3 to 4 inches of unribbed horn before the proper annulations commence, and that in the horns of immatures which are growing (as in the specimen above referred to) the big annulations start from almost the very base, beneath which the flesh-coloured corrugations will be seen in process of forming. It will be seen, too, from the photograph of this head on page 293 that the curve of the horns is not complete. Another proof of the animal's immaturity was visible in the numerous tawny hairs which besprinkled the mane—hairs such as are never found in the perfectly adult animal. A larger head than this is in the possession of Mr. J. Barber of Johannesburg ; it is 46 inches long.

My Dutch friends were not a bit interested in the sable head, but they thought that his skin would make good "Voor-slagt" (whip-lashes) and his meat good biltong, so we were all pretty happy. Tace having offered to return to camp and get the boys and oxen to drag home the spoil, the old man and I continued in quest of whatever fortune would favour us with that morning. Nor did the fickle goddess look askance to-day : the luck was all our way, had I only been able to avail myself of it.

Almost immediately after leaving the spot where the gallant sable had met his end, and while passing over burnt veldt, where the fresh spoor of any animal could easily be distinguished, we suddenly came upon perfectly new

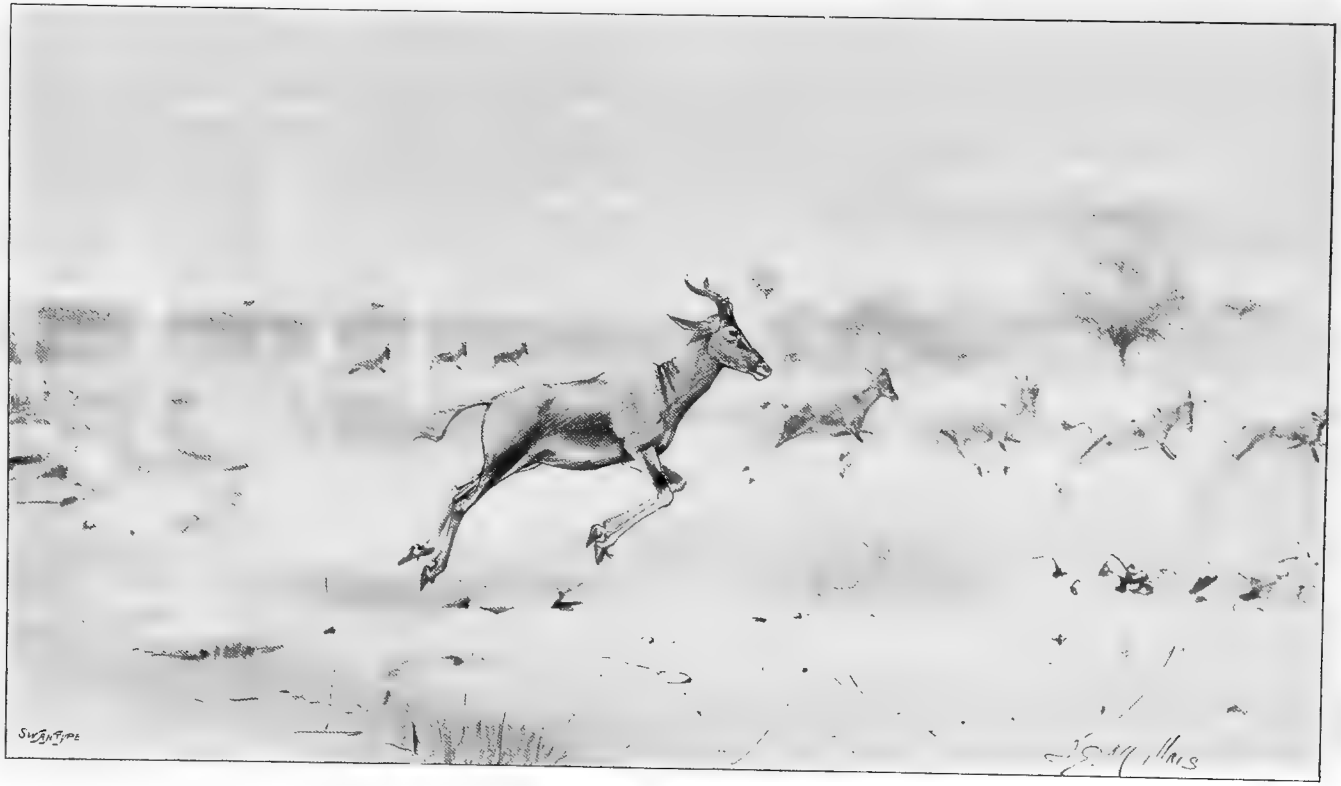


Sable Antelope resting and dusting

tracks of a big herd of roan antelope. They had evidently been close to us and disturbed by the last shot, so we lost no time in following the spoor. It was most exciting work, as, assuming a continuance of the burnt ground, we knew that, bar accidents, we should have little difficulty in overtaking the herd. Nor was our confidence misplaced. After spooring for about a quarter of a mile we saw plainly that they had subsided into a walk. And now, enjoying, as I always did, this phase of African hunting, I kept a sharp look-out ahead, while my companion hurried along at a fast walk with his eyes fixed on the ground. It was the easiest tracking imaginable, and a novice at the work, like myself, could safely canter on such patent spoor. Every moment we knew by the warm droppings of the animals that we were getting nearer to our prey; but by and by the bush got thick, and we were within fifty yards of the troop before I saw them, moving like grey shadows and occasionally showing the tint of their ruddy flanks and shining manes. Now, oh reader, for a dreadful confession! (and one is obliged to confess to one's book if to no one else). I had been feeling seedy all day, and in fact for the past week; but that did not excuse the appalling series of misses to which I must plead guilty. During the course of the ensuing hunt I had certainly five easy chances and three more not quite so easy, but out of all these shots I don't believe I touched a single hair! Shooting standing, when you are hot and tired, is, even when the shot is of the simplest description, not too easy a matter, and no one, unless he has hunted in Africa or India, knows quite what it means. A miss after an easy stalk, which in a cold climate would be inexcusable, becomes in time no matter of surprise when it is effected after a long gallop in a blazing sun. The shaking of the horse, the dodging under trees to avoid thorns, and the general strain from the excitement of the chase (which is a very different thing from buck fever) are all strongly against the rifle and in favour of the quarry. Though my performance was about as bad as it could be, that of my companion was not much better. He also had six shots without doing any damage! A complete "rot" seemed to have set in, but this I was past caring for; what annoyed me was that I had missed the chance of getting what I so much wished for—a good roan bull's head. The troop consisted of about fifteen animals, including two dear little calves that kept up well with their mothers; and among them were two good males, with apparently fine heads. My first two shots, however, were fired by mistake at an old cow, for at the moment I could not see a bull amongst the lot, and they were already beginning to move away. Then commenced the usual end-on chase, varied by stoppages for the taking of breath and firing of shots, each halt increasing the distance between us and the antelopes as they became more and more seriously alarmed; still I felt sure I should eventually kill the old bull which I had marked for my own, as he already showed signs of blowing hard. When a roan antelope is done he sticks his neck out straight and opens his big mouth wide, but these animals, I think, never hang their tongues out as deer do; at all events I have never seen them do it, though I have watched them carefully and at no great distance. We must have run about four miles, and the horses, and still more the game, were showing signs of extreme fatigue when, on turning to remount Brenke, who up till now had been on his best behaviour, the little scoundrel took it into his head to make a bolt of it. Now, having learnt by experience the futility of trying to catch a runaway horse by going after him, I quietly waited till his galloping fit was over; but by the time he was once more under my control the roan antelopes were well out of sight and the game was up for the day. For fully two hours we plodded on, on foot, so as to be as little conspicuous as possible; but to no purpose. Though the animals were so done that their ordinary pace was reduced to a walk, yet by keeping a sharp look-out behind, they invariably sighted us before we could detect them. Time was now getting on, and as there seemed little hope of again coming to terms with the quarry, we abandoned the chase with sore hearts. It had been a disastrous hunt from beginning to end, and my companion was as dissatisfied with himself as I was, for neither of us could say that he had not had a fair chance. What hunter cannot recall such a series of mishaps, unless indeed he is one of those fortunate individuals who never miss a shot until well into the middle of the second volume? However, koodoo marrow-bones and hot tea will dispel most men's cares, particularly when the flicker of the fire-light shines on a 45¼ inch sable head.

We stayed two more days by the Nuanetsi, and had it not been for want of provisions and the Dutchmen's anxiety about their families, I could well have put in another fortnight there, as the country is so charming. Several natives from a Shangan village to the eastward had come in and brought somewhat startling news about Matabele risings. The Dutchmen thought so seriously of it that I could not if I would—and I certainly would not—prevent their returning home to look after their women-folk, who, if accounts were true, were in considerable peril.

Just as we were leaving there came from the other side of the river a waggon drawn by a beautiful span of black and white oxen, while behind it

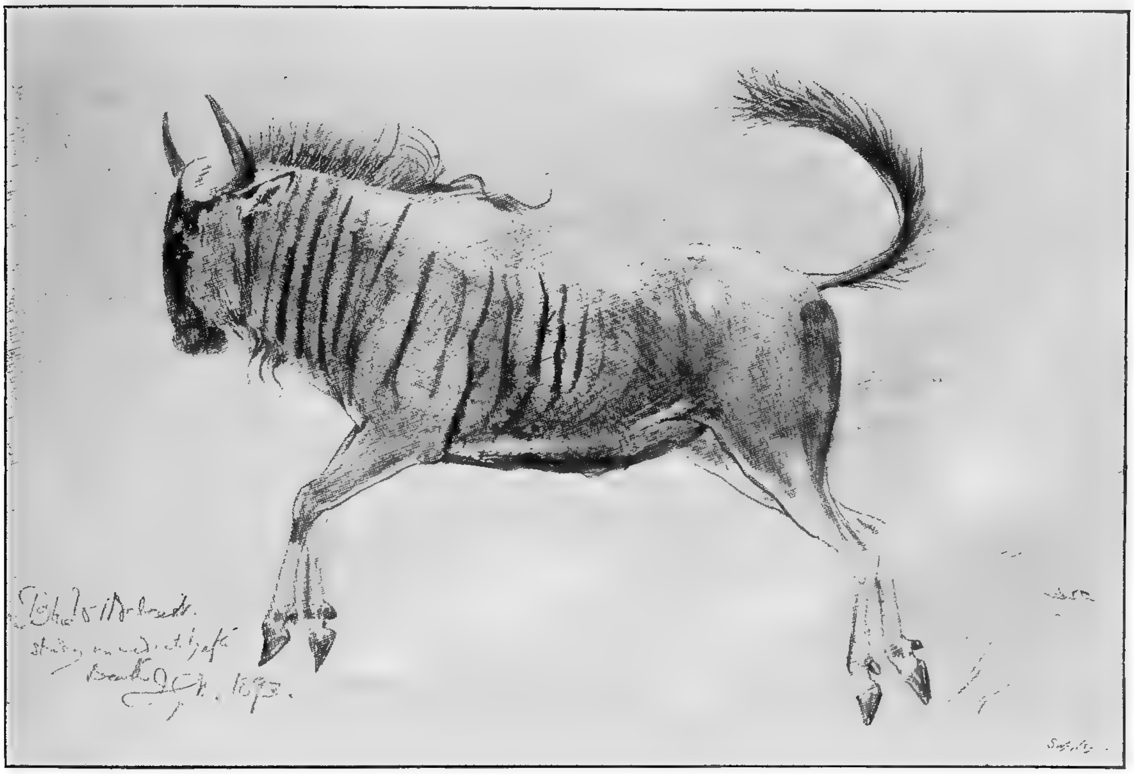

SWAN TYPE
J. G. Millais

SASSABY RUNNING

rode one Rousso, a half-bred Dutchman, and an Englishman named Mitchell, whose face I seemed to recognise. He seemed to know me too, and after some talk we discovered that three years previously we had been soldiering together in Dublin. So small is this big world we live in ! He was bound for the mouth of the Bubye, where his hunter said there was no fly but lots of hippopotami, both of which statements were untrue. As Mr. Mitchell with his beautiful oxen had already come down the Nuanetsi through a certain belt of fly, it seemed pretty rough on him, but how he fared afterwards I never heard.

We then left for a spot we had named Tigrefontein, Oom Roelef and myself going far up the river on the chance of finding fresh buffalo spoor, the only thing we should have allowed to detain us. About an hour after starting we came on a splendid waterbuck, and I at once gave chase, but just as I was about to jump off and take a shot at him he dived into a deep sluit and seemed to disappear by magic, for I never saw him again. Hardly had I left the spot and turned my horse when I met a big herd of pallah filing past ; but as usually happens in herds of twenty to thirty of these antelopes, there was only one good ram, and he so persistently remained under cover of two or three ewes that, though the buck were far from wild, I could not get a shot at him. And now having rejoined my companion, we cut right across country to some low-wooded hills, at the base of which we had previously seen much fresh sign of a troop of Lichtenstein's hartebeest ; in fact I had noticed in the distance an animal moving through the trees, which, from his light and shining appearance and subsequent spoor, I had little doubt was of this species. A good deal of game seemed to have moved into the sweet young grass since the big fires had died away. There was plenty of fresh sign of Burchell's zebra, koodoo, roan antelope, and Lichtenstein's hartebeest, and a little of eland, sassaby, and sable antelope ; but, much to our disappointment, the afternoon was wearing on without any game in view till, when riding some 200 yards to the left of my friend, I saw, cantering along close to me, a troop of seven large antelopes. Though dark in the skin, the light shining on them made me think they were Lichtenstein's hartebeest, but the moment they stopped and the shape of their horns became plainly visible, I saw they were sassaby. One of them stood still for a moment, but I muffed the shot, as well as a more difficult running one, and Oom, who fired just as the animals were moving, said that his bullet struck. We now mounted our horses and followed them for about three miles ; but the farther we rode and the more tired our horses became, the fresher the sassaby seemed to be. The sassaby, indeed, seem to have solved the problem of the greatest amount of speed to be got out of antelope legs with the least possible exertion, and may be highly commended to any sportsman who wants a lesson in hard riding for nothing. On the move this antelope has the same ungainly and "humpy" look as the blessbuck; and on seeing the two animals running for the first time one is apt to think that any good horse could easily overtake them. But not a bit of it: sassaby and blessbuck are the two fleetest antelopes in South Africa—so much so that the swiftness of the former has passed into a Zulu proverb. I am sorry I can say no more of them from personal experience. All I can do is to give my readers a sketch showing to the best of my ability the animals as they appeared on the move. And now, with many apologies for this digression, I go back to the hunt. Having "done got experience" (as the niggers say), and our horses being thoroughly fagged out, Oom suggested that we should go right back to the starting-point, where he was sure his buck was lying dead, for (as I told him) I had counted seven animals and we had been pursuing only six. The old hunter here proved himself worthy of his profession, making a very pretty and artistic piece of spooring over not by any means easy ground, picking out exactly where the buck had left the herd, and eventually bringing us to the dead body of an old sassaby cow which his shot had taken just a little too far back. When we got into camp late, we found Tace had been lucky enough to come across the hartebeests; but as he said he had wounded and lost an old bull and three cows, we concluded he was either romancing a bit, after the fashion of those peculiar Dutch sportsmen who don't kill very much, but whose bullets never fail to strike.

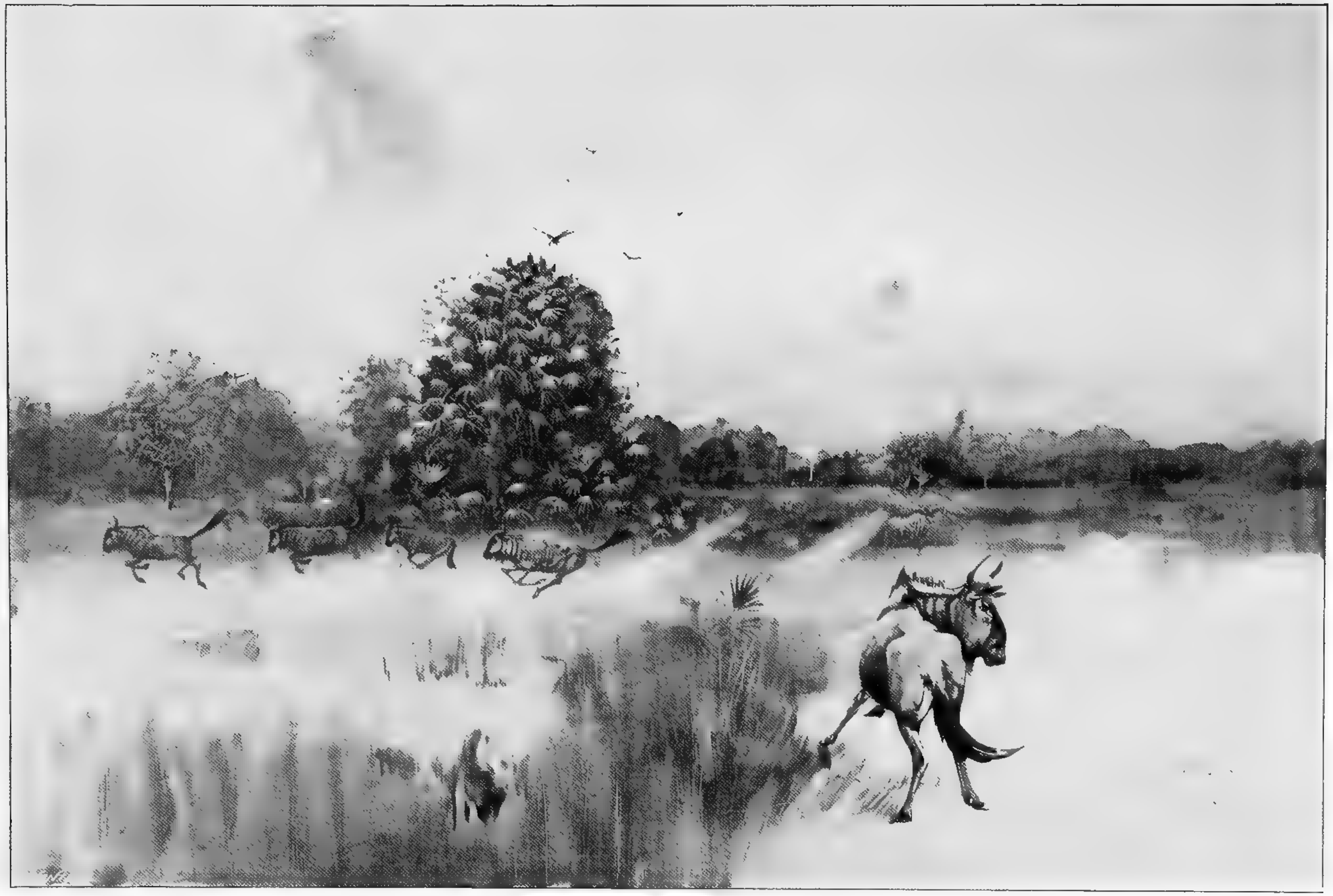
No event of interest occurred for the next few days till we were a day's march the other side of the Bubye. As we all knew the country—a great sparsely-bushed plain—we hunted separately, and on meeting at the dirty mud-puddle called something or other "-fontein," the other two hunters assured us they had seen both sable and roan antelope, though I saw nothing but a duiker, which I missed. The old man said he had seen a great deal of fresh roan antelope spoor, besides a fine old bull, which he had unfortunately wounded and lost. Being now keener than ever to get a roan bull, I suggested that the old man, Tace, and Teenie should go on and rejoin the family, while Piet and I, with one of the Kaffir boys, returned to the Bubye for a week's hunting. To this proposal all agreed except the old man, who, although very anxious about his family, refused to part company with me. "No," said he; "we are mates for this year, and mates we will remain." I really could have got along now quite well by myself, but so determined was he that I should not return alone that in the end I consented, stipulating only that the others should go on and apprise the old lady of our coming. Accordingly with one waggon we went back to the Bubye and spent the next three days hunting assiduously for the game, of which a good deal had come in to the bush and surrounding lands during the past two months. Every day we saw koodoos, waterbuck, and pallah; and the second day, whilst hunting in the evening by myself, I chased a waterbuck ram for about two miles to the river, and was beginning to overhaul him when Spotty put one of his fore-legs in a jackall burrow and came down with me, but luckily without damaging either me or himself. By the time I was on again the buck had got into the thick bush by the river, and I lost him. As I turned from the spot, however, I saw a small troop of pallah and five koodoo cows crossing a flat in front of me; and riding up to the koodoos as near as I dared under fear of disturbing them, I tied Spotty to a tree and tried a bit of a stalk, hoping there might be a bull which I had not seen. Koodoos are



SKETCH OF A BLUE WILDEBEEST BULL

remarkably quick of scent as well as of ear, but as the ground was undulating, and the grass partly burnt made my progress almost noiseless, I got within forty yards of the troop in some thick wait-a-bits without their seeing me, and could easily have killed any of the cows had I cared to do so. They were moving along slowly and evidently were somewhat uneasy, and I had the finest opportunity for observing their peculiar walk and the sensitive motions of their ears, but, alas ! there was no bull with them, and they soon disappeared in the thick trees.

On the following morning Oom and I set out for the open flat lands, which are the favourite resort of the roan antelope, and in passing through the heavy bush which grows near the rivers we came across the fresh spoor of what was either a Lichtenstein's hartebeest or a blue wildebeest bull. As we were emerging from this thick cover and had reached the more open veldt we heard a shot from Piet far away to our left, and in about two minutes we descried the dark form of an animal cantering through the trees straight towards us. Catching a glimpse of its horns, I thought at first it was a buffalo cow, and in another minute was off my pony ready for a shot as it passed by. Then, as the animal stood facing us at about fifty yards' distance, I recognised in my friend the well-known blue wildebeest. Now my shooting had been pretty groggy for the last week, but I thought I was on the animal, when up went his black tail as he capered and cantered off again, heading straight for the open country apparently unhurt. But he was an old bull, and seemed to go a bit lame, so there was hope of another chance at him. On his standing for the third time I made rather a lucky shot as he was on the move preparing to gallop off again. The shot struck him in the left haunch, completely disabling him, and, coming to close quarters, another shot in the neck ended his career. This was almost as good as the longed-for roan antelope, for the blue wildebeest is now getting very scarce in Southern Mashonaland, and I did not expect to be so fortunate as to see, much less to obtain, a specimen. So much has been written on this extraordinary-looking antelope that it seems superfluous to add any notes except as to his peculiar movements. Compared with his flashy and interesting cousin, the white-tailed gnu, the blue wildebeest is a clumsy and stupid-looking brute, and his movements, though quaint and comical, altogether lack the fire and dash of the black wildebeest. Before starting for a gallop he kicks up his heels and whisks his tail in the most ridiculous fashion, and then runs off in something like a semicircle, but there is little spirit in his movements. On seeing the animal for the first time one is struck with the great

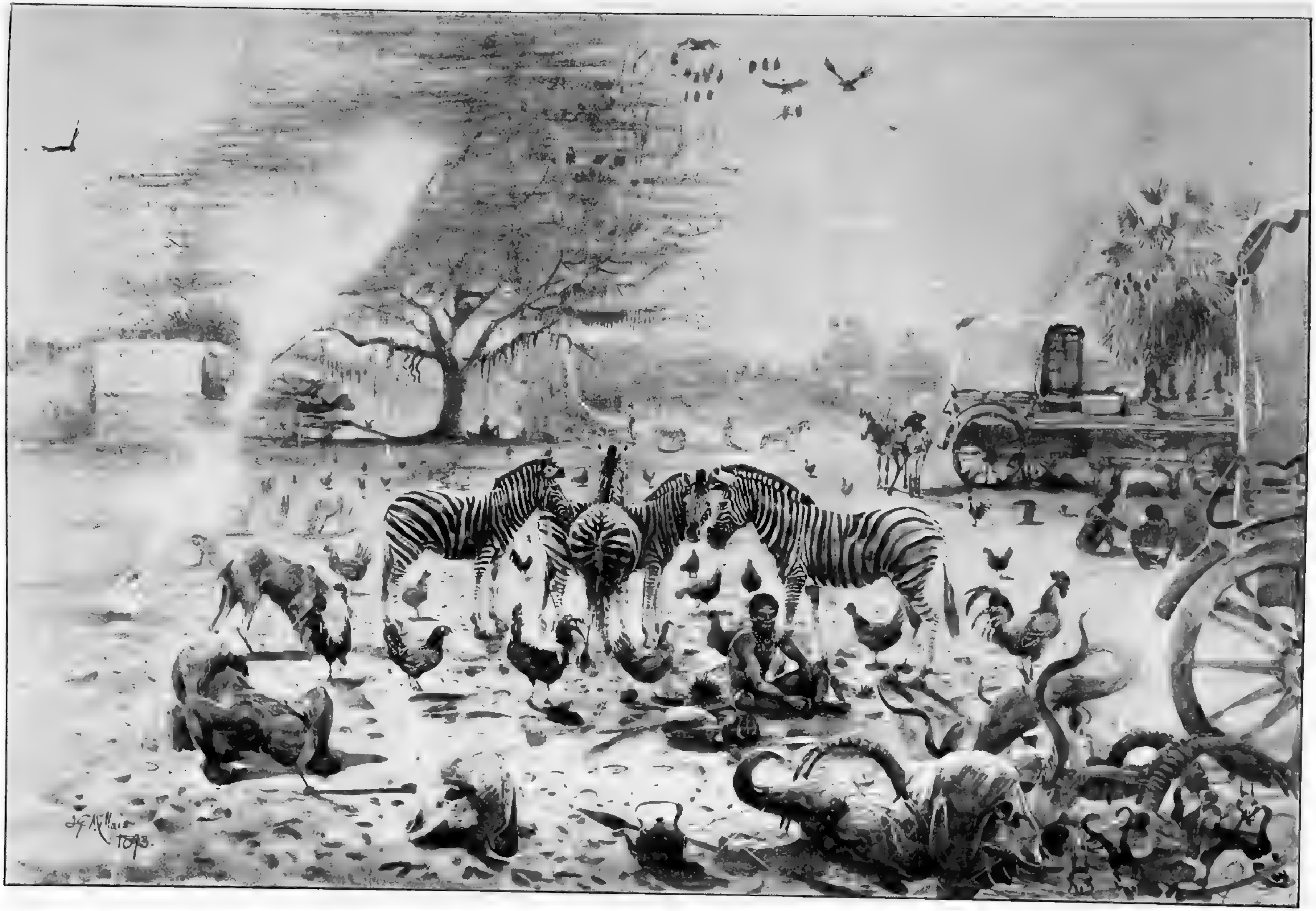


HE TAKES A LOOK BEHIND OCCASIONALLY, TO SEE IF YOU ARE STILL FOLLOWING

disproportion between the size of the head and that of the body, the former seeming far too large and clumsy for the clean, pony-like legs and quarters that bear it forward. I noticed too a peculiar trick on the part of this wildebeest. As the animal runs away from the hunter, he keeps frequently screwing his head round to see if his pursuer is coming; and this without in any way checking the pace. Being very old and in miserable condition, the head of this animal—a good one—was the only thing worth taking to camp.

That evening, whilst hunting by myself in the thick bush along the river, I came close up to a koodoo bull, which gave me the easiest chance imaginable, for he simply stood and stared at me within twenty yards. I was using a little Fraser rifle with an almost solid bullet, but the big antelope only plunged forward about ten yards and fell dead; on the whole, then, this was one of my most fortunate days. It should, however, have been a good deal better, for I had a fairly easy chance at a waterbuck ram going homewards, but, as bad luck would have it, one of the horns of the koodoo which was on the pommel of the saddle before me got entangled between my leg and the stirrup-leather as I was hurriedly dismounting, and by the time I had half tumbled off, the waterbuck was running slowly across me. I must confess I ought to have killed it; but it got clean away.

We now gave up all hope of getting a roan bull, and the following day trekked for Gong. There is a long strip of dense mimosa stretching for about five miles along the north side of the great sluit which joins the Bubye near the Blauw Ghat, and along this strip Piet and I determined to hunt parallel to the course of the waggon. To reach this big thicket Piet and I decided to make a detour up the river bank, on the chance of meeting one of the few buffaloes which we knew, by the fresh spoor and droppings, were hereabouts. By the side of these African streams there are generally fairly broad paths made through the thick bush by the game trekking to and from the water, and we had been moving along one of these for some time when a large animal, which I saw at once was a lioness, sprang up from the long grass within ten yards of us, and uttering a low growl, bounded away through the thick bush, where it was impossible to follow her with our horses. She might, however, be tempted to cross the broad open space separating the thick bush from the forest of thorn trees beyond, and so give us a chance; and in this hope we forced our way in different directions towards the open, having, as we thought, the lioness between us. After she had disappeared I heard her growl twice, and have now no doubt that, diverging to the right or the left, she slipped away behind our horses without our seeing her, her escape being all the more easy as we had no dog to force her out of the cover. We went back and beat the strip where she was last seen, keeping a sharp look-out, though not expecting her to charge without first warning us of her whereabouts ; but we never saw her again. Shortly after this we saw a fair amount of perfectly fresh buffalo spoor, and I much regretted that the Matabele row obliged my hunter to return now to his family ; for we might have had some good sport here if there had been time. Mid-day saw us once more at the fontein "nameless here for evermore," and though it was a big trek I thought I could find my way alone hunting parallel to the track to Michelsfontein ; so off I set. Towards evening I came to some low hills where there were great numbers of guinea-fowl, when a loud roaring bark attracted my attention. It was a koodoo bull that was giving tongue—the only time when I ever heard one bellow—and shortly afterwards I saw him disappearing over the ridge. After this I wandered about for a long time till it was dark, knowing that I was not far from the water ; and as soon as the sun set a friendly tree enabled me to see the light of our camp fires and so find my way home ; and here as I off-saddled our old friend, Oom Roelef's brother-in-law, Cornelius Basadanote the elder, whose boy I had treated for fever, rose from the fire where he had been sitting and shook me warmly by the hand. He was glad to hear of our good sport, and thanked me very nicely for the medicines left for his son, which had completely cured him. He himself had been very successful in the hunting, and on his invitation I went next morning to see his collection, and was greeted with a most cordial reception by his women-folk. The camp presented the appearance of a miniature zoological garden. In addition to the necessary horses, dogs, and fowls, which seemed to roam at large in every direction, about twenty-two beautiful Burchell's zebras, tied to little posts, were complacently munching their hay. Besides these were two little sable antelopes, with the softest eyes and most fascinating manners ; whilst two young spotted hyænas and four hunting-dog puppies peeped from the shadows of a roughly-devised kennel made of branches. The whole scene was so thoroughly African that I made several sketches of the camp and its surroundings, two of which I present to my readers. The afternoon was spent in pursuit of guinea-fowls, in which Gentleman assisted me as gamekeeper. Sitting on a hill-top I presently discovered the main troop as they neared the water for their afternoon drink, and could hear the old cocks screeching forth their inharmonious notes ; and in about ten minutes I had killed no less than fourteen of these


J G Millais
1893

A DUTCH HUNTER'S CAMP

birds, and was off again to the camp, with Gentleman staggering under the spoil.

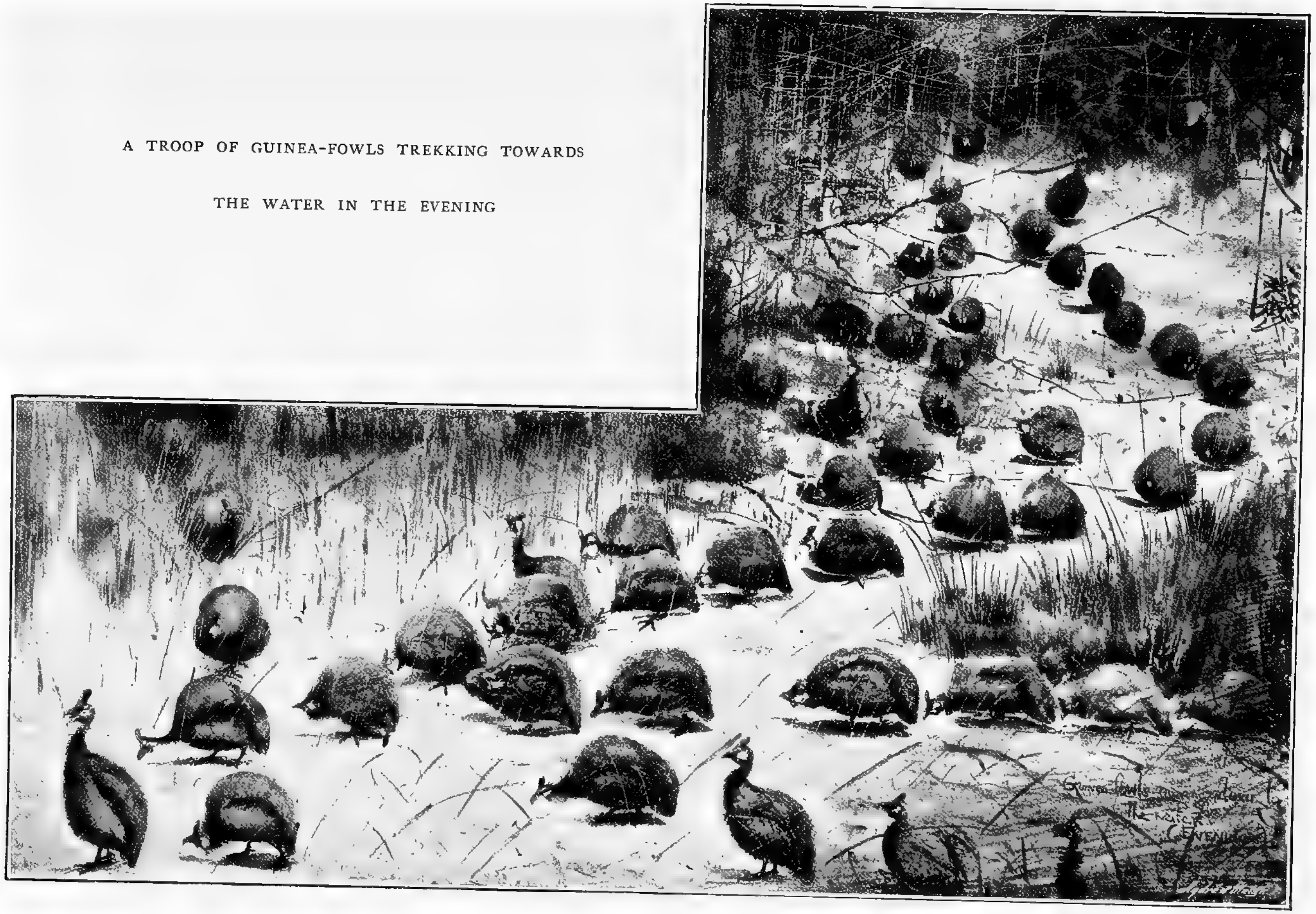
It is a big trek from Michelsfontein to Gong, and as we were doubtful whether we could get the waggon through in one day, Oom Roelef rode off at daybreak so as to reach his family the same afternoon, leaving me to follow later on. It must have been about four o'clock in the afternoon when, approaching the pools of Gong in expectation of seeing a few of the outlying oxen feeding and the blue smoke of the camp fires curling heavenwards, I noticed, to my surprise, that there were no fresh traces or sign of oxen having been there recently, and as I got nearer and nearer the old place of outspan I felt there was something wrong. Tante was not there, and as I slowly walked my horse up to the deserted pools I saw nobody but the old man, who was lying fast asleep against a log with his hat off, "to catch Heaven's blessed breeze," while in his right hand he held a letter. Though I made some noise in off-saddling and knee-haltering Brenke, the old hunter did not awake. He was evidently wearied out, and I did not like to awake him, fearing that he had had bad news; so I sat and watched his beautiful features—never more strikingly displayed than now—and in the course of half an hour I had finished the drawing here reproduced. As the air grew chilly and darkness was coming on I collected sticks and lit a fire, and shortly afterwards Oom Roelef awoke and told me all. Several days after our departure a party of Matabele made their appearance one morning, and told Tante that if she did not trek back to Transvaal at once they would kill the whole lot of them. Hert and Piet had fortunately returned to her, having arrived the previous day, and that evening they made preparations for departure. Still no immediate danger was feared till Hert, by chance, strolled over to the grass huts of some half-bred Basutos only a short distance from the outspan and heard what had happened there. At first he could find no one, but as he was going away a man whom he recognised as the eldest of the natives came out of the bushes, and addressing him in Zulu, told him that six of his people had been murdered by the Matabele, he himself only just escaping death at the hands of a man whose assegai actually penetrated the blanket in which he was sleeping. Hert soon saw enough to prove the truth of the native's statements, and the following day, the family trekked south to the Limpopo, there to await our coming. The letter held by Van Staden had been stuck in a prominent place in a tree, and its contents set our minds at rest for the present, though there was a chance of the Matabele making it hot for us if they caught us there.

At night the waggon arrived; and Piet having seen some roan antelope, we spent the following day in hunting for them, but again without success. That day about dusk a transport rider, with his horse pretty well done up, appeared on the scene. In a wild state of excitement he told us that war had broken out, and the Matabele were watching the road between Victoria and the Middle Drift in order to cut off any waggons they could intercept. He told us also of the operations outside Fort Victoria that marked the real commencement of the war, and various other occurrences, all of which are now ancient history. Suffice it to say that the place we were aiming for was the Middle Drift of the Limpopo lying directly to the south, and to reach this might prove rather difficult in a few days' time. Still on a consultation round the fire that night we decided that, since the Basadanotes, whom we had left at Michelsfontein, were to trek along this road a month behind us and might therefore fall into the hands of these black rascals, it would be cruel to leave them in ignorance of what we had heard, all the more so as they had women and children with them. So, as my Basuto ponies were not played out like Van Staden's two horses, I decided to do the ride of about fifty miles there and back in one day, taking both the ponies as alternate mounts.

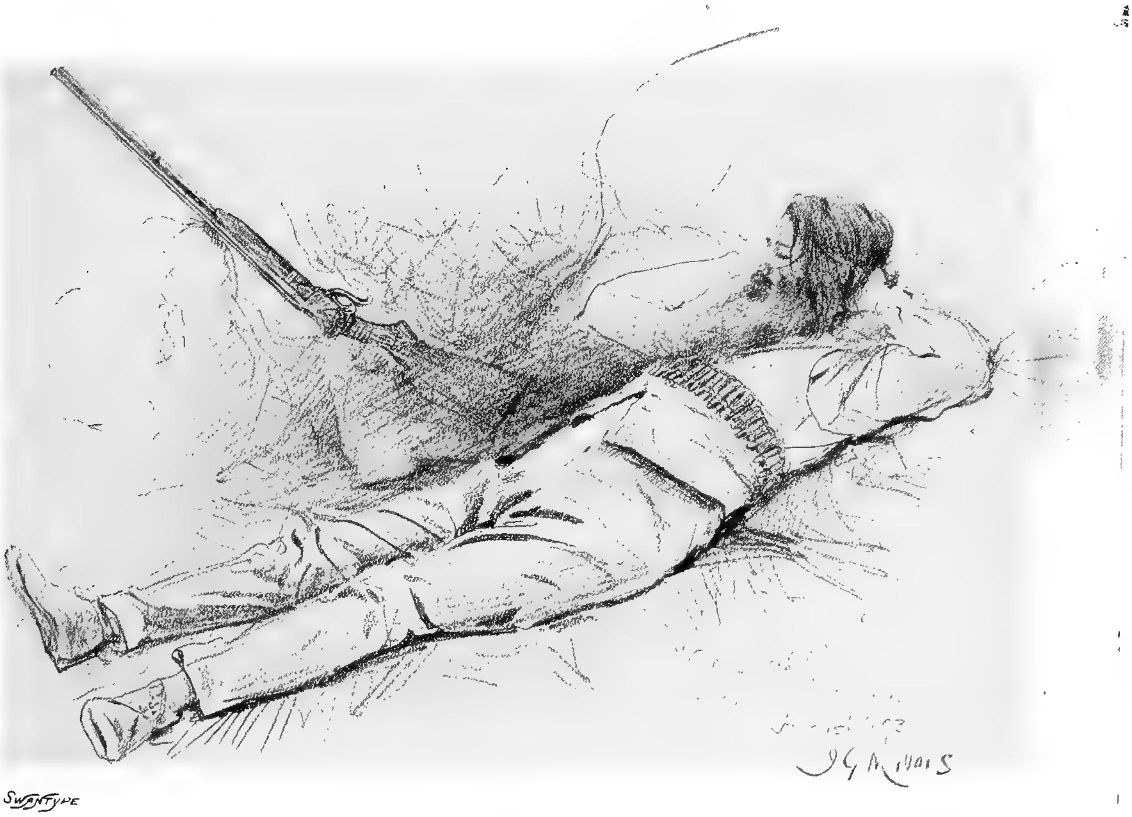
Starting at daybreak at a quiet canter, I halted at the corner of Gong Hills, and off-saddled there to give the ponies a rest, knee-haltering Brenke, who was a bit of a rascal to catch, and allowing Spotty to run loose. Now Spotty was generally as quiet as a lamb and with no tricks about him, but to-day he no sooner caught sight of the bridle in my hand than off he went, making straight for the path leading to Michelsfontein, and—what was far worse—he neighed to Brenke, who instantly smashed his knee-halter and galloped after him. There was nothing left now but to trudge after them both in the blazing sun; and never shall I forget that long and weary walk and the bad language that alone could express my feelings. At last, when just about done and dying of thirst, I heard a cock crow—the sound most cheering of all to the heart of a hunter as he returns to his waggon, but never more so than at this moment, as telling me that Basadanote's camp was not far off. The ponies were there already, and on my arrival the Dutch hunters received me with that courtesy which I everywhere experienced from this class of men during my stay in South Africa. The best refreshment their waggons afforded was brought out, and on hearing my news, for which they were most grateful, they decided to trek out at once. I, too, dared not prolong my stay, for the loss of two hours caused by the wicked conduct of my ponies compelled an early start in order to

A TROOP OF GUINEA-FOWLS TREKKING TOWARDS

THE WATER IN THE EVENING


Guinea fowls
the water
Evening

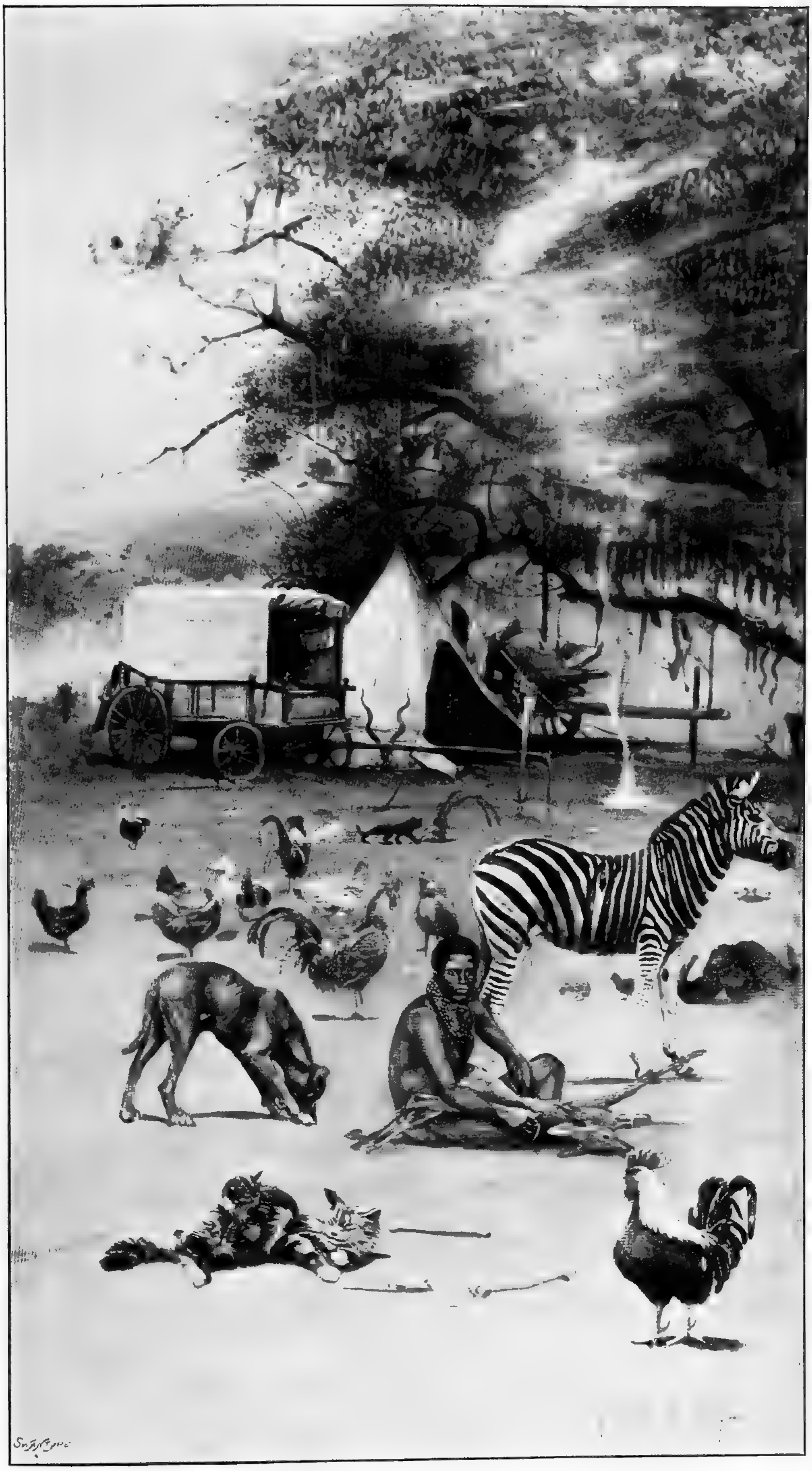
reach my own camp before dark. Indeed I failed to achieve this. The sun sank below the horizon at least an hour before our camp fires came into sight, and there being no moon, it would have gone hard with me to find my way back had not the ponies known the path well. And now another misadventure befell us. About nine o'clock, when I was trudging along on Brenke, leading Spotty in my rear, and every moment expecting to see the glow of the fires in the sky, came the rush of some wild animal through the grass and across the path immediately behind Spotty, which caused that otherwise quiet nag to spring suddenly forward in terror and strike me a violent blow in the back. The concussion was so sudden and unexpected that I was thrown forward on to Brenke's neck, and at the same moment both horses started off down the path in a mad gallop. Things would have been all right if I could have regained my seat at once, but the displacement of my weight unfortunately caused my pony to cross his legs, and down we both came in as fine a cropper as ever fell



OOM ROELEF ASLEEP

to my experience. The pony must have turned a complete somersault over me, for the next instant I felt the whole of his weight on the top of me, whilst something (probably one of the other pony's hoofs) caught me violently on the back of the head, knocking me quite insensible. As proved afterwards, I must have lain under a thorn bush about a quarter of an hour in blissful ignorance of the world and all that therein is. Then as consciousness returned I noticed first of all the loss of my hat, after which the absence of my ponies gradually dawned upon me. Thinking that no bones were broken, I scrambled up, and having after some trouble discovered the lost headgear reposing gracefully on a thorn tree, I crawled on as best I could towards the camp. Here I found everybody in a great state of excitement. The terror-stricken ponies had galloped in right up to the fire, where they now stood trembling from head to foot; and, fearing that I had been attacked by a lion, Oom and Prince were preparing to start in search of me, with a lantern and a bottle of whisky. They were more than delighted to see me safe, and apparently sound. I soon found, however, that my collar-bone was broken and all my left side badly bruised and crushed, seeing which the old man bound me up as well as he could, and next morning we made a start for the Middle Drift. The second day brought us to the Umsingwani Drift, whence Van Staden rode on to rejoin his family, and I, being too knocked about to ride, trudged along on foot by the side of the waggons. The big river was now before us, and on nearing it a remarkable sight caught my eye—an eagle making two separate strikes at a Bush khoorhan. The bird (a bateleur) dropped on to its prey, and apparently failing to kill it, he mounted again about 20 feet into the air, and turning over, dropped and struck for the second time. I had never before seen or heard of any of the eagles acting in this way, for as a rule most of these great birds drop in a blundering fashion on to their prey, and then, hanging on to it at their whole leg's length, allow it to kick and struggle as much as it pleases, finally putting an end to it by stretching their heads down and separating the vertebræ close to the skull.

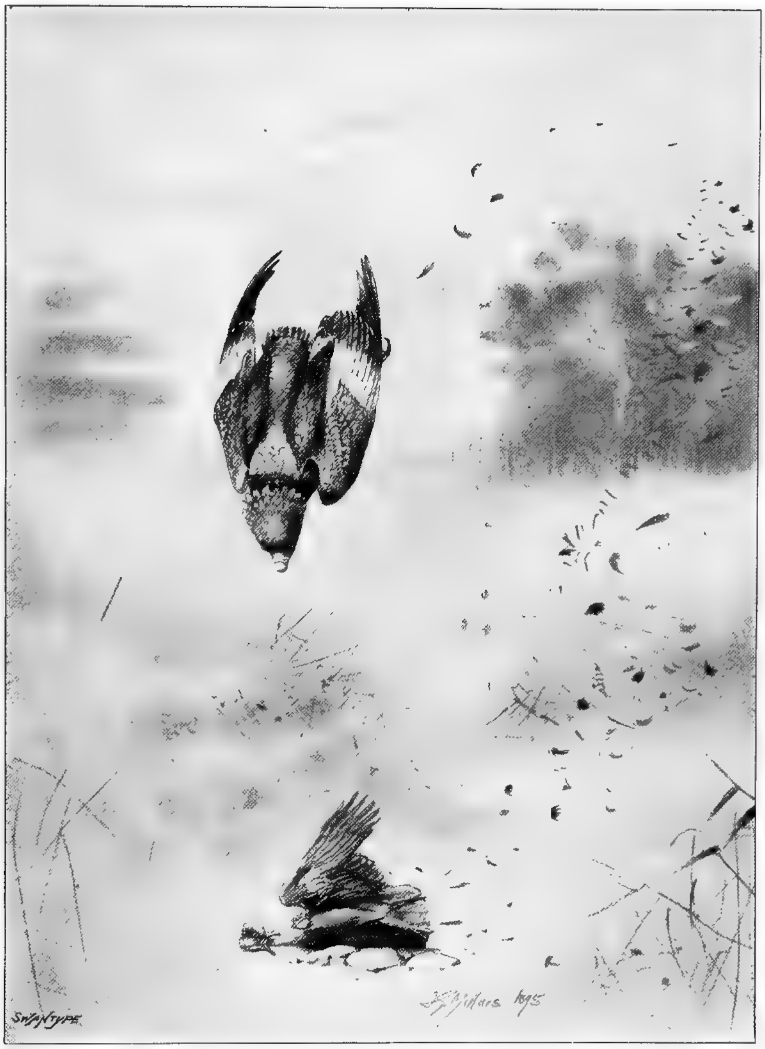
On our arrival at the Middle Drift I went straight to the police camp, where Sergeant Chawner, seeing my dilapidated condition, treated me with the greatest kindness. Knowing surgery and having the necessary bandages, he bound up my shoulder most satisfactorily; but it was more than a month before I could use my left arm. Here at this Middle Drift were a number of waggons bound for Fort Victoria, but all blocked and with little hope of getting on now that war had broken out. And not far off was dear old Tante, once more happy with her united family in beloved Transvaal. She and her daughters all



A CORNER IN BASADANOTE'S CAMP

fell upon my neck and embraced me in true Dutch fashion, for the poor old lady had had rough times at Gong, and had almost given up the hope of seeing us all round her again.

But I must go back for a moment to our march from Gong. Within an hour of the time that my waggon and oxen had crossed the Limpopo, three of the draught animals showed unmistakable signs of tsetse-fly poisoning, proving that we had unfortunately hit upon infested ground at our first camp on the Nuanetsi. The symptoms of this poisoning are easily recognised. The poor creatures refuse their food and suddenly assume a starved, played-out look ; the eyes are blurred, there is much running at the nose, and the animal breathes



BATELEUR EAGLE MAKING DOUBLE STRIKE

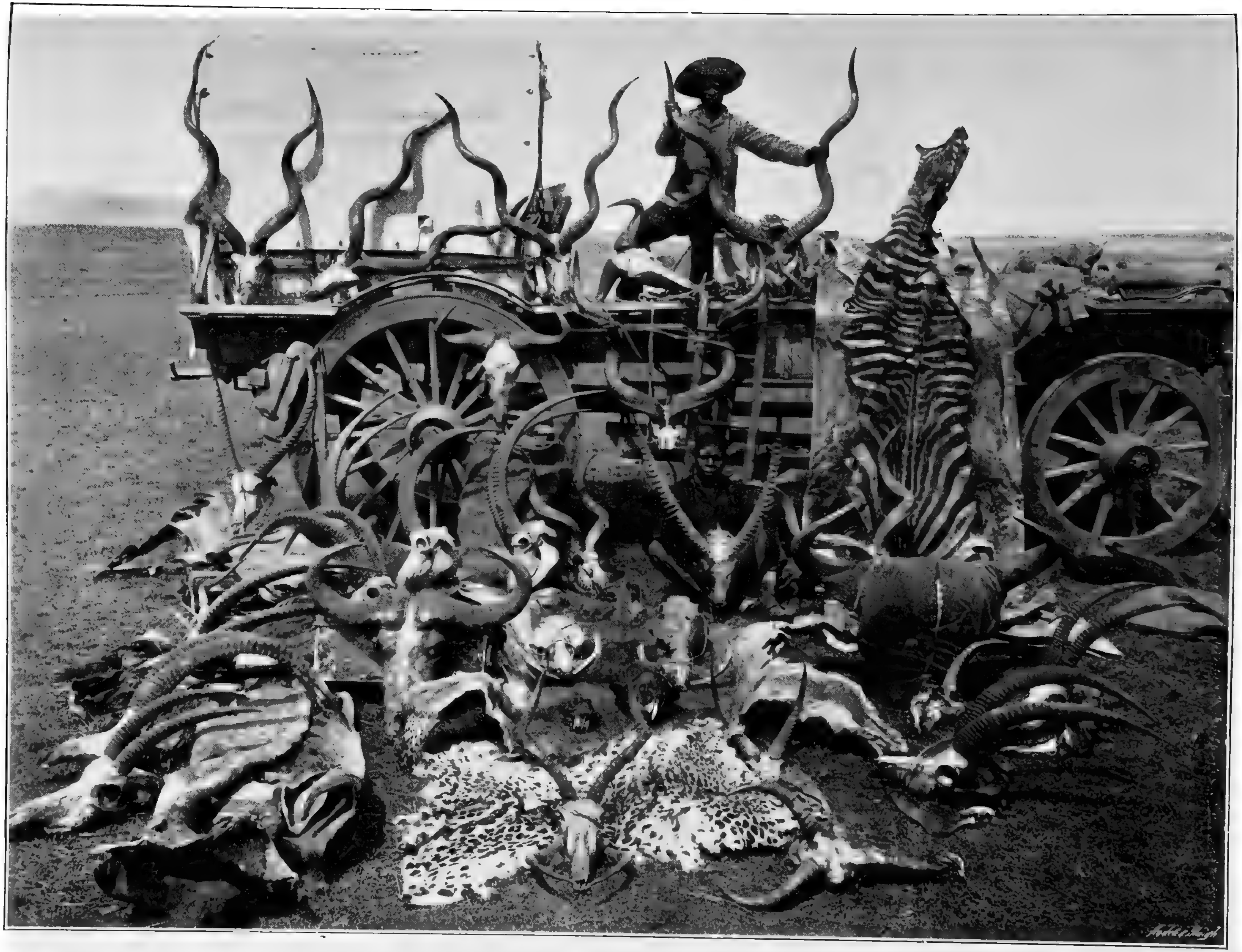
heavily. One of these oxen lay down and died the same evening, and with the assistance of Piet I got him skinned, to see how the bites had affected him. As far as I could make out, the poison had entered at only three points—behind both shoulders and near the kidney. Its course was shown by a purplish streak, and around the point of entry the whole of the flesh and fat within a radius of 1 foot had turned a greenish yellow. Whether the fly inserts the poison first, and sucks the blood afterwards, or *vice versâ*, seems to be as yet a moot point amongst the authorities; but this at least is certain—that water applied to the wound causes the poison to take effect at once. If, therefore, an ox stung in the belly gets wet by passing through a stream, its fate is sealed.

The day had come at last when I had to say "Good-bye" to my dear old friend Oom Roelef. Together had we tasted the hopes and fears, the sweets and disappointments of the happy hunting-grounds, and under these influences our comradeship had ripened into the affection of brothers; for no form of existence brings men closer together than the wild free life of the hunter. The charm which I felt in his society was perhaps, in a great measure, due to our mutual love of Nature and of the excitement of the chase; but the longer one knew him the more one's interest and affection were enlisted by the simplicity and unaffected earnestness of the man's whole nature. When Oom Roelef said a thing, he meant it in its most literal sense, and in all he said or did one could not fail to notice the kindness and generosity of his heart. We seldom meet with our ideals in this life; but in my mind old Oom will ever stand out as a model of what a hunter and a true gentleman should be. Bret Harte has given us a similar character in "Luke," in words so appropriate to the man of whom I am now writing that I cannot refrain from quoting them:—

> "We are going to-day," she said, "and I thought I would say Good-bye
> To you in your own house, Luke—these woods and the bright blue sky!
> You've always been kind to us, Luke, and papa has found you still
> As good as the air he breathes, and wholesome as Laurel-tree Hill.
>
> "And we'll always think of you, Luke, as the thing we could not take away;
> The balsam that dwells in the woods, the rainbow that lives in the spray.
> And you'll sometimes think of me, Luke, as you know you once used to say,
> A rifle smoke blown through the woods, a moment, but never to stay."

"As good as the air he breathed, and wholesome as Laurel-tree Hill." Such natures lift us above ourselves, making us feel that the world is not quite so bad a place nor human nature quite so despicable as some of our latter-day pessimists would have us believe.

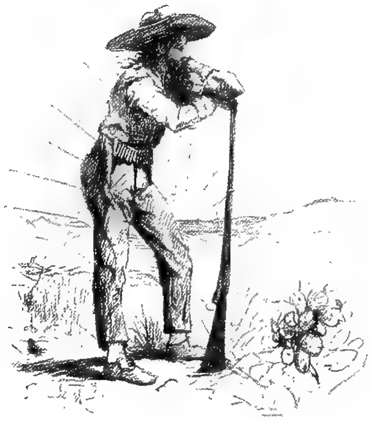
As the old man wrung my hand at parting he said, amongst many kind



PRINCE, GENTLEMAN, WAGGON, AND HEADS

things that I should not care to repeat, that though he felt himself growing too old for the hard work of the Veldt and should hunt no more on his own account, he would never forgive me if ever I came to Africa again and journeyed with another. Yes; Boers have hearts like other people, as you soon find out if you only go the right way about it. The old Frau and the girls were in tears as we kissed all round, with little hope of ever meeting again; and I must confess I was deeply moved.

And now, let other writers say what they may in disparagement of the Dutch nation, I can never bring myself to join in that sweeping condemnation that is too often poured upon them by my countrymen. Mynheer Van Dunck is far too cautious a man to open his heart to a stranger, and his bluffness of speech and manner is apt to create a false impression on anyone who does not know him well. Hence, had I left these people after a month's acquaintance, and without having learned to speak their language, I should have come away with a very different opinion of them from that which I eventually formed. So here's to Van Staden and his good family, and may they live long and prosper, as they deserve! As long as I live I shall remember that day and hour when the beautiful, kindly face and romantic figure of the old man faded slowly away in the flush of the crimson morn.



"GOOD-BYE, OLD FRIEND"

CHAPTER X

After saying good-bye to my friend I hastened on to Johannesburg, where Mr. Duffus, an enterprising Scotchman from Aberdeen, took an excellent photograph of my waggon and heads.[1] Looking at the display of horns, the reader may perhaps be led to suppose that the bag is a much larger one than it really was; but as a matter of fact all the skins and horns packed comfortably away in the small space beneath the kartel. Indeed, the district I traversed was by no means overstocked with game, though for variety of sport, and especially of antelopes, I think it would be bad to beat. I should not, however, recommend this route nowadays, the journey being exceptionally long and tedious. By going in from Beira on foot one can almost at once find game in far greater quantity. At the same time these pedestrian trips have their disadvantages, for the chief delights of African sport can only be enjoyed from the saddle of a really good horse. Moreover, in all these east coast localities the climate is bad, and there is no certainty of obtaining either koodoo or sable antelope, the heads of which are, to my thinking, the finest trophies that Africa produces. Personally I was exceptionally fortunate with these two animals, but then I gave up more than half my time exclusively to their pursuit; for, as every hunter knows, in a new country there is nothing to be learned by squandering your attention on every object you come across. Let politicians say what they may, there is no such urgent necessity for "one man, one vote" as for "one trip, one animal" (or, say, at most two) to him who would make the best of his time as a sportsman and a naturalist. Nearly all wild beasts are becoming every day more difficult to obtain, and all vary in their habits more or less; the hunter may therefore be well content with one or two good specimens of any one species, and having got these, to pass on to the next.

Hardly anything new, I think, can now be said about either lions, elephants, or buffaloes, or their pursuit, so elaborately have they been dealt with by previous writers; but as to antelopes the subject is not nearly so hackneyed;

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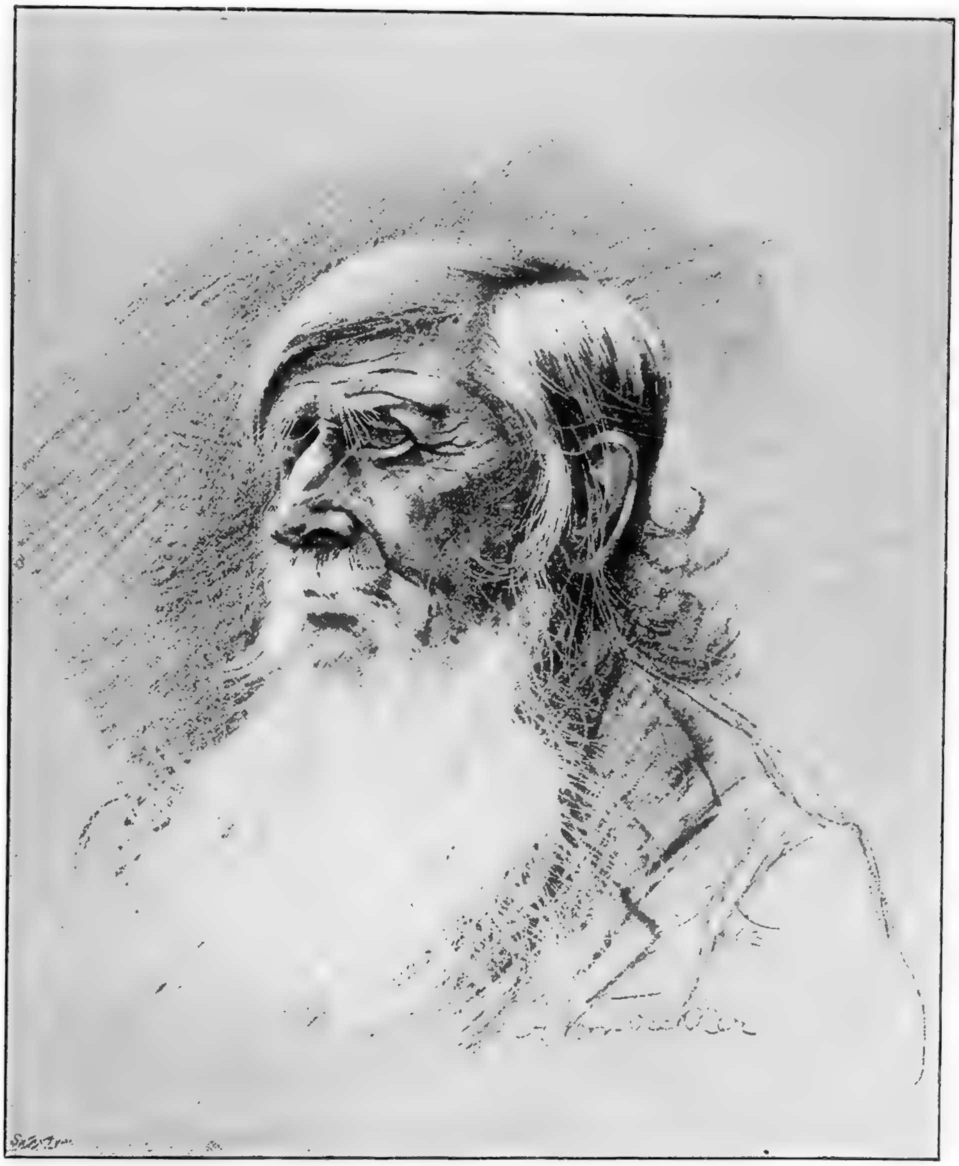
[1] See p. 319.



A VOOR TREKKER

so on this trip I made them my principal study, winding up with the white-tailed gnu, to which this final chapter must be mainly devoted.

Nowadays, roughly speaking, Lower South Africa can show but three animals whose habits can be watched without fear of their fleeing from the presence of the observer. These are the blessbuck, the springbuck, and the white-tailed gnu or black wildebeest, as it is commonly called in South Africa; and of these three the last named is by far the most interesting. To my mind, indeed, this extraordinary-looking creature is the most interesting animal in the world, and as there is but too much reason to fear that it is doomed to extinction, I am glad to have seen for myself its curious pranks and movements as exhibited in its own home. Indeed I would not have missed my small experiences in its charming society for more than I can tell.

At one time tens of thousands of these wildebeests were scattered in troops of from twenty to fifty over the whole of the face of the Southern Transvaal and Free State High Veldt, and as the result of careful inquiries I believe that to-day there are hardly more than 550 in existence. On the lands of Mr. Vessell-Vessell, near Bloomfonteine, there are about 200, fenced in. A neighbour of Mr. Vessell has about 100, also fenced, and Mr. De Plessis has partially fenced in about 150, which are, however, constantly breaking out and getting shot; whilst old Piet Terblans of Severghat, near Kronstad, has about 210 of these creatures running perfectly wild.[1] Scattered troops, too, are said still to exist on some of the farms of Victoria West, but of them I can hear no reliable accounts. All I can gather is that, out of almost countless thousands of black wildebeests that once roamed the plains of Southern Africa, there remains but this poor remnant, and even of them we must expect that at least half will be gone within the next five years, unless stringent measures be adopted for their protection. Knowing this, I was naturally anxious to make acquaintance with Piet Terblans and his wild belongings, and after numerous inquiries in Johannesburg I was fortunate enough to obtain an introduction to that worthy. But the prospect of a visit was not altogether rosy. All who knew about Oom Piet described him as a virulent, anti-English Boer, and a man of ungovernable temper. Nobody, however, seemed to know the old Voor trekker personally, so in the hope that he was not quite so black as he was painted, I made for him a few days later, traversing in a Cape cart the grassy uplands of the Orange Free State. To my great delight, I passed on the road within 300 yards of a fine troop of the animals I was coming to see, and as they merely got up and whisked their snowy tails in the sunlight without evincing any unusual signs of fear, I concluded that they would be easily shot—a mistaken idea which I was shortly to correct, for in the African spring, when the grass is short, there is no animal much harder to approach. As the cart stopped at the house, the Lion came out of his den, and I informed him that I had come to stay—a prospect which (seeing that I was an Englishman) was hardly calculated to overwhelm him with joy. However, on my offering to pay liberally for my keep and for the wildebeest that I wanted to shoot, he presently gave in, and after I had told him my name and the object of my visit, he obliged me (in Dutch) with something like the following remarks:—

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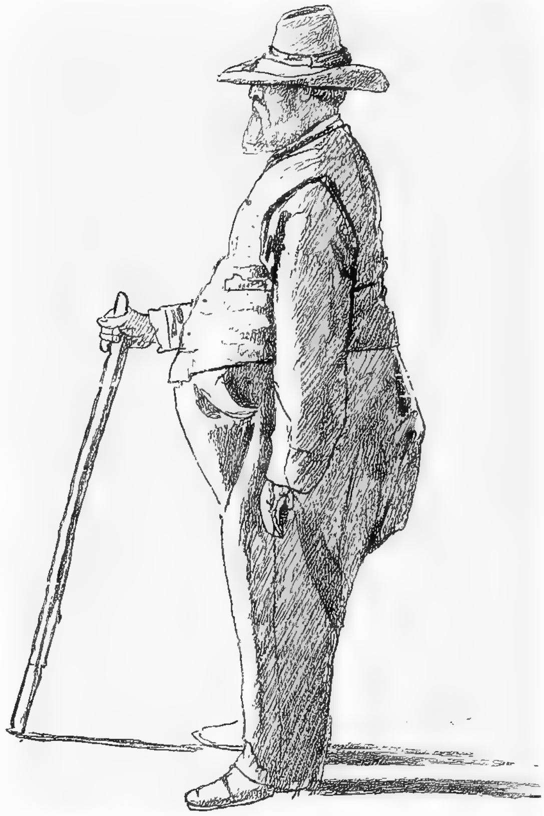
[1] The black wildebeest thrives well in captivity; witness the youngster born in our Zoo last year and the growing troops on the Continent—one near Amsterdam and the other in the possession of Mr. Riach, the German importer.

"What will Jan Müller make of the wildebeest? You are an Englishman; *you* cannot shoot wildebeest! My son will shoot one for you, from which you can make prints. Where do you come from? Oh! you've just come from Mashonaland. And" (incredulously) "you only came from England this year! Ah! now I know you are a big rascal, like all the English, for no man can learn to speak Dutch in nine months. Now *I* have met "Red-necks" all my life, and can only say 'How-do.' Besides, *I* will not learn the d—d English" (this with astonishing force). "Come and drink coffee."

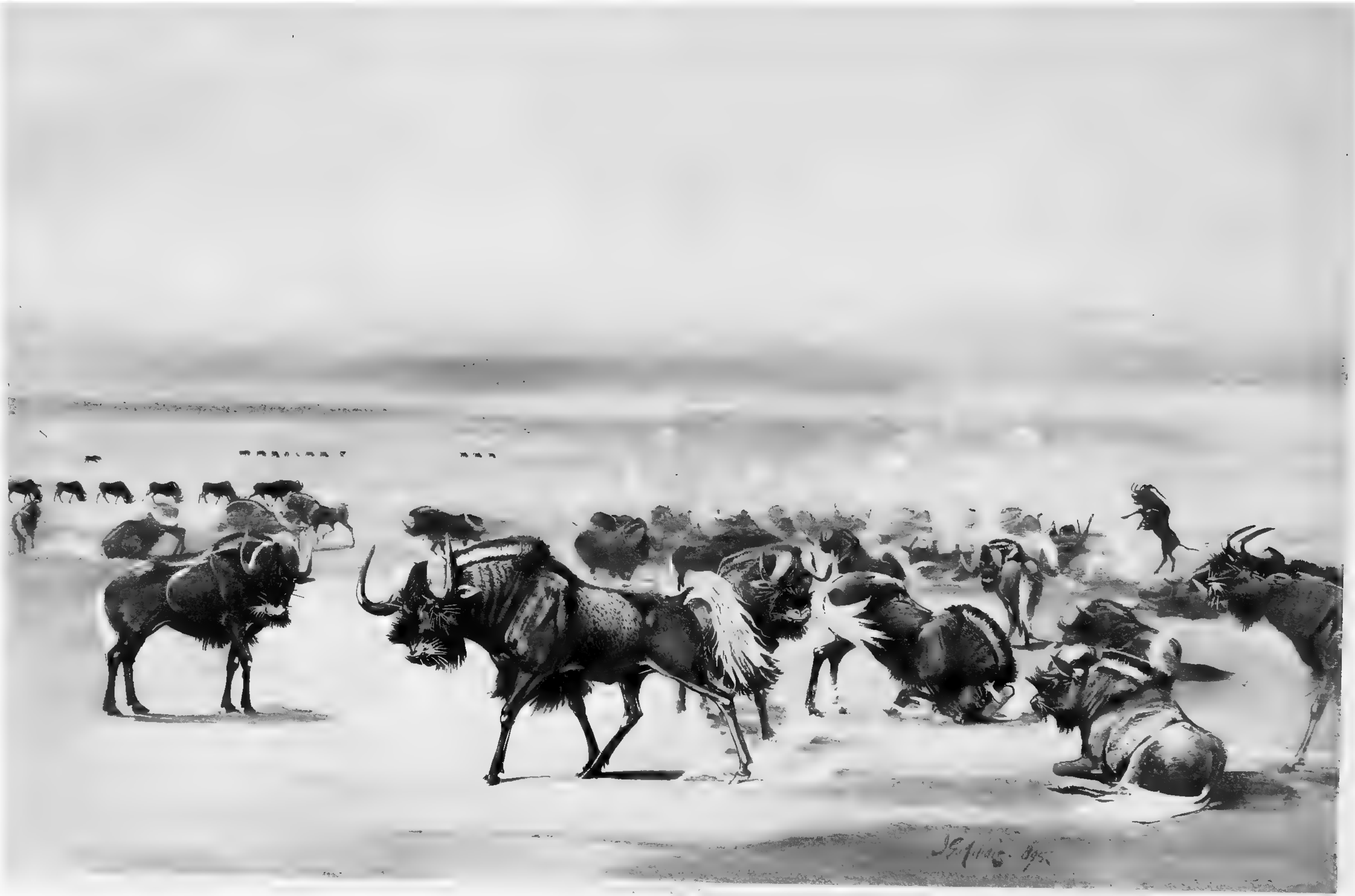


PIET TERBLANS
An Orange Free State Boer.

Oom Piet Terblans, now an old man of seventy, was a typical specimen of the Orange Free State Dutchman; and like most other members of his nationality, exceedingly tall and massive; for amongst white men the Orange Free State Boers are probably the tallest and sturdiest in the world. This is no doubt due to the excellence of their climate, for the Boers of the Transvaal are no bigger than the average Englishman; on the other hand must be placed the fact that, though immensely strong, few Boers, even when leading healthy outdoor lives, maintain to the end the litheness and activity which are such a marked feature in the Anglo-Saxon race. After middle age they lay on fat, like bears in winter, and as to their womenfolk, the proverbial Alderman is n in it in the race for obesity.

But to return to Oom Piet. He was born, I may say, on the seaboard the Nysna Forest, where as a young man he killed both elephant and buffal Starting life with a waggon and a few oxen, he claims to have been the fi settler in the upper plains of the Orange Free State ; and to-day, by his industr thrift, and perseverance, he is probably one of the richest men in that part the country. Like other Dutchmen, however, he adheres to the simple mo of life of his forefathers, existing on coffee, bread, and meat, and going to b at sunset ; while we, with our advanced civilisation, poison ourselves with superfluity of dainty dishes and deleterious drinks, and think nothing of wasti our strength by sitting up half the night. Oom Piet, I have said, was thrift He was more than this. Though rolling in wealth, according to the measu of his countrymen, he clutched eagerly at every sixpence that came in his wa and during the first two or three days of my stay he was constantly demandin payment for the most trivial services. This, however, was his one weak point he soon gave up asking, and as we came to know each other better I found hi a most agreeable and interesting companion, and, like Van Staden the hunte a grand type of the Voor trekker, and a man of marked individuality whom was a pleasure to study.

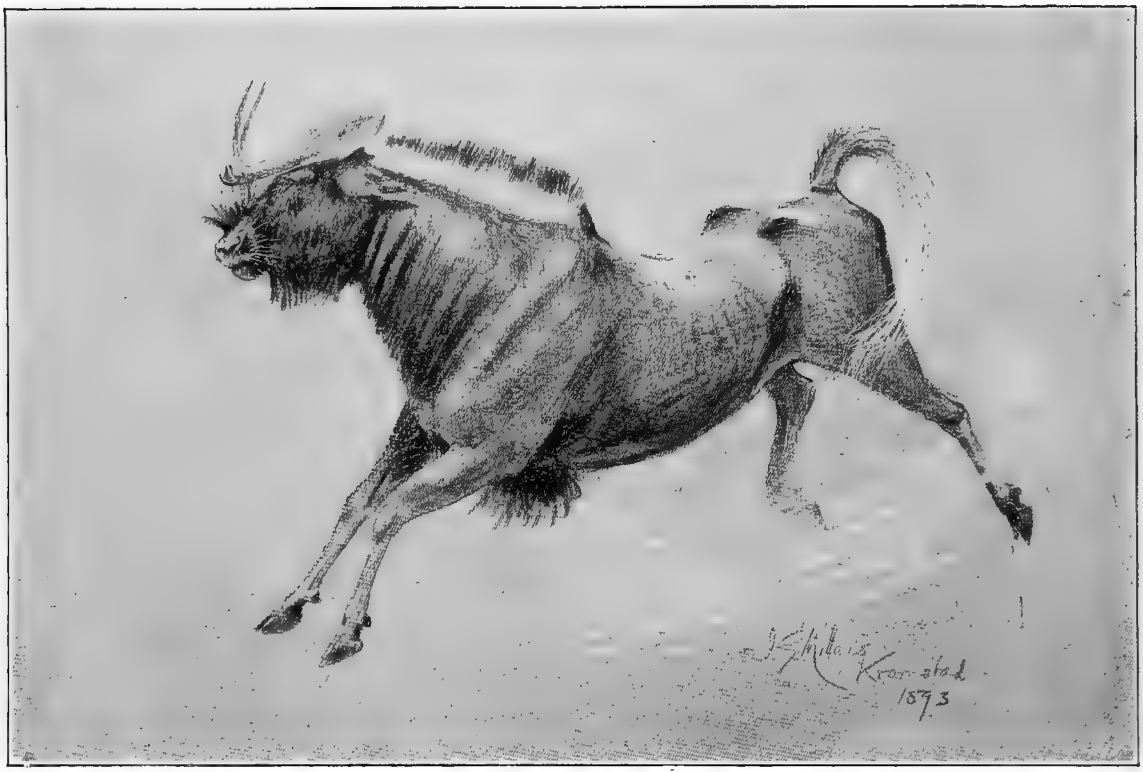
In the evening, after prayers and supper, every one retired to rest, m sleeping quarters being in a sort of shed at the back of the house, where comfortable bed was provided for me. The door and window, however, bein things of primitive fashion and badly hung, any of the various denizens of t farm-yard who were disposed to share my apartment could readily enter, as found out at daybreak next morning. A rasping noise at the foot of my b woke me up, and there I saw an old sow complacently scratching her ba against the framework, while with equal familiarity several hens were discussin the uses of my drawing materials on the table, and testing their respecti merits as articles of food. By the time I had bowed out these visitors mi host appeared, and asked if I meant to sleep all day ; for the Boers are ear risers, all the work having to be done before the heat of the day. Now I h arranged with the old man for his son (Jan) to call for me in his hunting ca at six that morning, and after a preliminary cup of coffee I waited anxiously f his advent ; but it was ten o'clock before a rattle of wheels and barking Boer dogs announced his arrival, and not until I had set eyes on the cart, wi its stolid occupant and a wildebeest hanging underneath, did I understand wh


J G Millais. 95.

White tailed Gnus

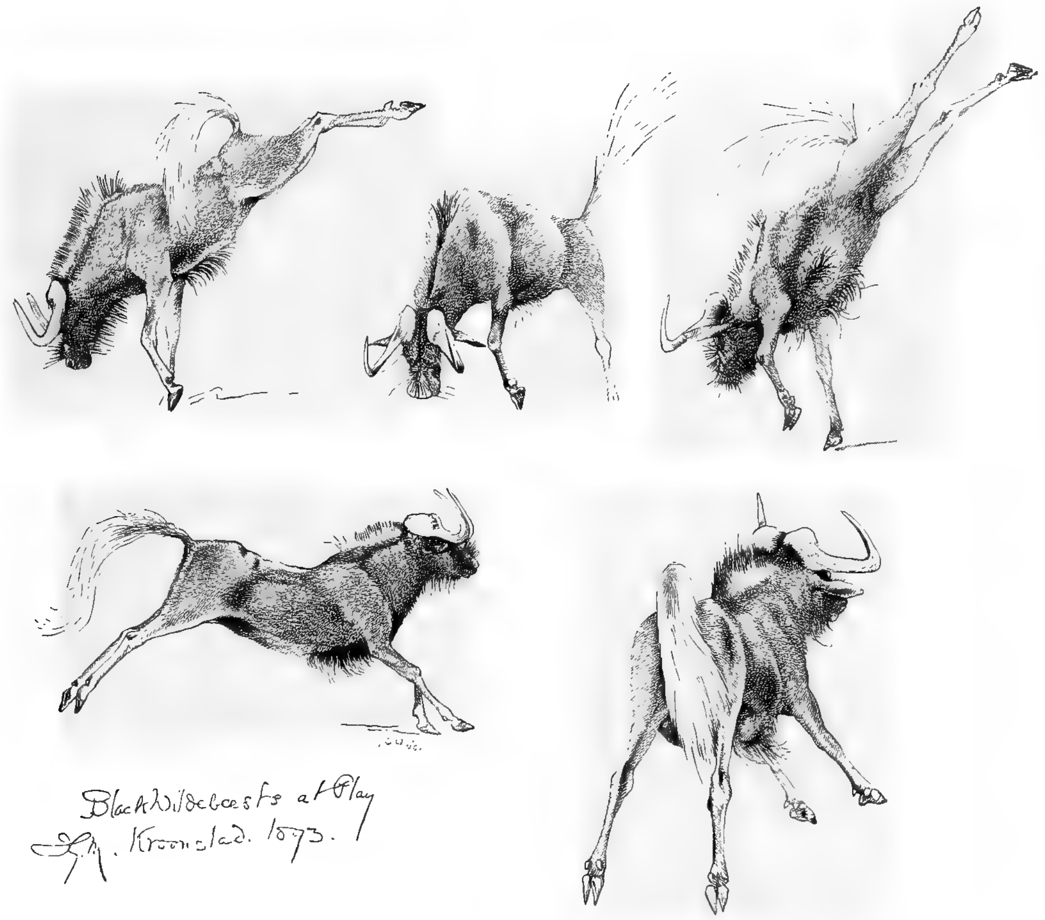
Oom Piet meant as to the hunting trophy I was anxious to obtain. I went to him at once, and told him that I did not wish for the wildebeest, and should certainly not pay for it; upon which he seemed much annoyed—marvelled too that any man should care to be at the trouble of shooting one himself when here was what he wanted lying, as it were, at his feet. After a long altercation, in which I made him understand that unless I shot the wildebeest myself I should not care to have it, he became so irate that I saw I must buy the carcase, or he would not allow me to shoot at all; so at last I cashed up on the understanding that I might shoot three more myself. Jan the son, it seemed, had shot the animal that morning as it came down to a pool to drink, and thinking that his work was done, had driven off, after depositing it at his father's house; and it was only on my promising to pay an exorbitant sum for his services in driving me about on the Veldt that he consented to do so; and without further parley off we went.

When not actually on the feeding grounds in the morning and evening the white-tailed gnus have a habit, in common with many other antelopes, of selecting some particular spot in a large area of country to which they faithfully adhere all the year round for the purpose of resting and basking there during the warm hours of the day. One of these herds—the first we saw—was resting close to the road, about half a mile from the farm-house. They were about twenty-five in number, and we hoped by sticking to the road to get within three or four hundred yards of some of them, when by good luck I might obtain a steady shot at the old bull, whose presence I had detected. At a distance, however, the sex of black wildebeests facing the spectator is difficult to determine, the size of neck and horns not being so easily distinguished as when the animal is in profile. As we got nearer several good shots at the cows presented themselves, but it was not till the troop had begun moving about uneasily, shaking their savage heads and whisking their tails about, that I let my rifle off. Then I found I had under-estimated the distance, for the shot passed between the forelegs of the animal I selected, and off they all went in two diverging strings, displaying their unique antics. This was really the best chance I had during the first three days, most of one's shots having to be taken at from 450 to 600 yards, at which distance even a mark the size of a wildebeest is very difficult to hit. Towards the end of the third day, having killed only a blessbuck in spite of letting off a good many cartridges, I began almost to despair of getting a bull. Again and again, as we came fresh on the different troops that wandered over Piet Terblans's country, fair shots at the cows presented themselves, but the bulls took such uncommonly good care of themselves that their destruction was no easy matter. At last, after manœuvring and trying every sort of device to approach a fine herd of nearly fifty animals, in which there were no less than four good bulls, I got a chance, and took it—a very long and somewhat fluky shot, the animal I fired at being already in the act of turning away. My bullet, however, cut the tendons above his hind fetlocks, and down he fell. I was now at some distance from my companion, who had left me lying down behind an ant-heap, and to my surprise, I saw him gaily circling along in the cart till within 300 yards of the animal, when he prepared to come into action with his own rifle. Whether he imagined the beast was going to run away again or not I don't know, but that was his explanation when I joined him. On our coming within thirty yards of the wounded wildebeest we were quite astonished with the fury he exhibited. The eyes of this creature, which are at all times wicked, now seemed to blaze with rage; and I doubt if when wounded there is any animal, excepting a lion, that looks so absolutely savage as the white-tailed gnu. But, poor thing, he had no oppor-

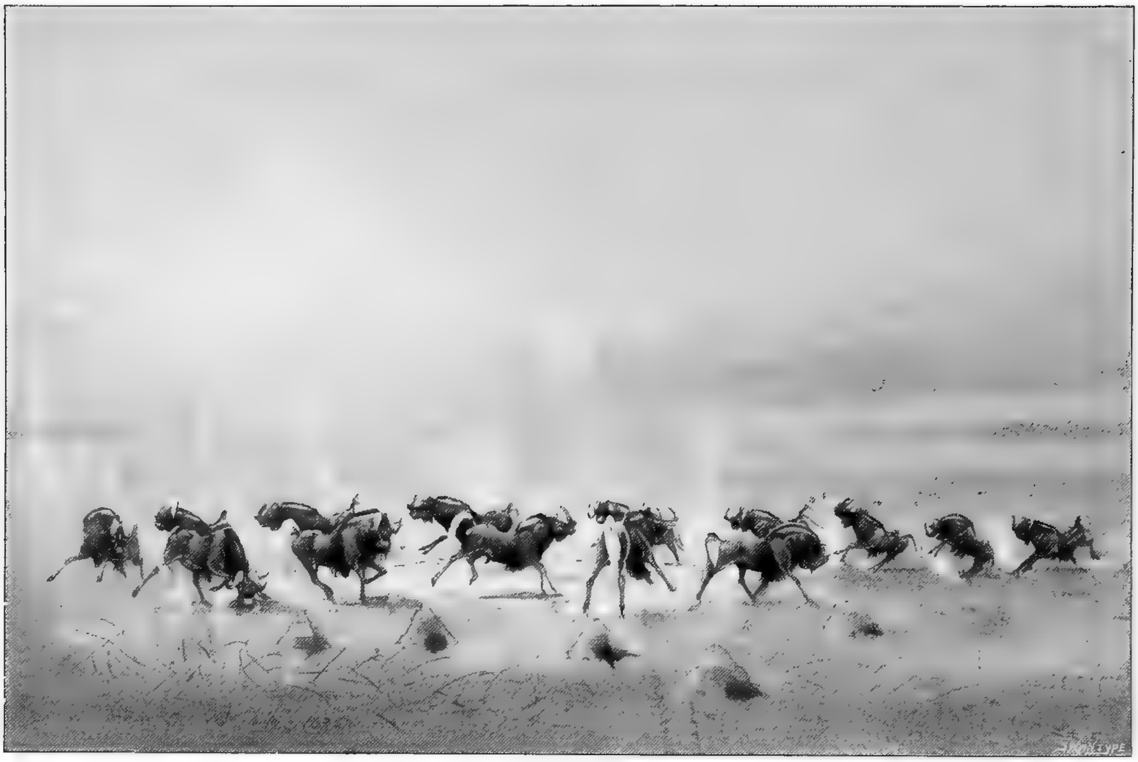


STUDY OF A BLACK WILDEBEEST STOPPING

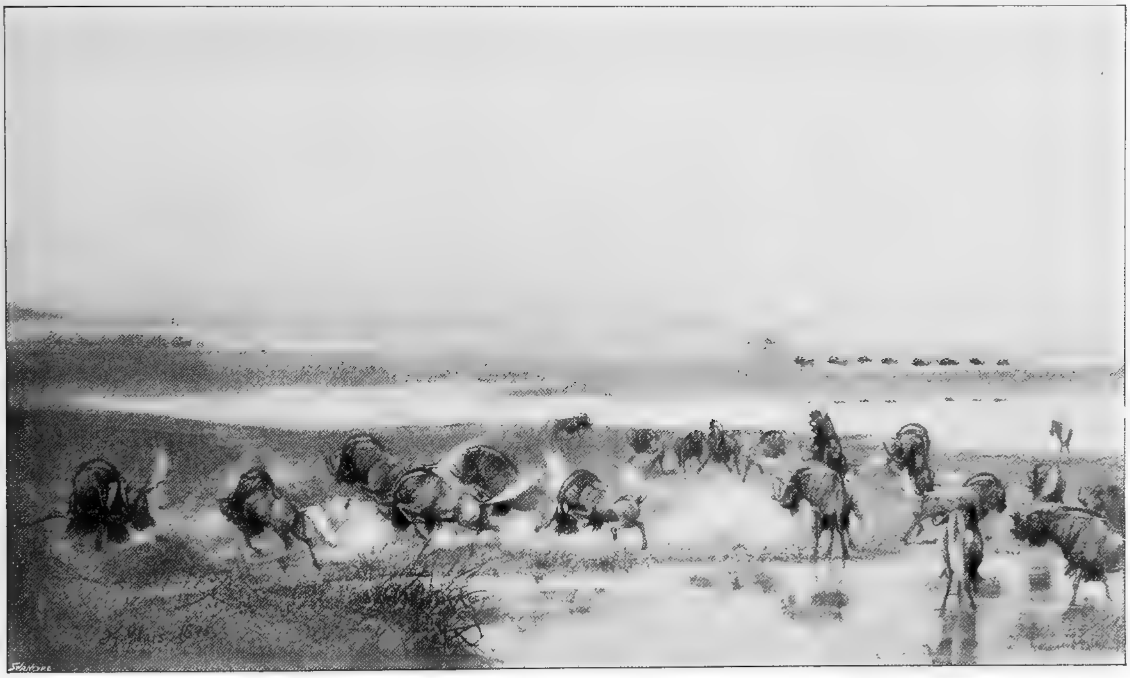
tunity for avenging his injury, for he was quite disabled, and a bullet mercifully put an end at once to his display of indomitable courage. This was a bull in the prime of life; the palms of the horn were smooth and rounded, and had not commenced the cracking and breaking which I imagine takes place in the horns of all bulls over five years of age. That I had now obtained a specimen was, I must say, due to good luck rather than to anything else, and on reflection I saw that if I was to kill another of these animals, some other means must be tried, as they were now so fearfully wild that success by following was extremely problematical. By watching them, both when in pursuit and when they were moving at their leisure, I noticed that even though repeatedly disturbed they always returned sooner or later to the same spot; so on the following day I proposed to Jan that after scaring the beasts from their resting-ground he should attempt to drive them towards me. Jan, however, who at his best was never



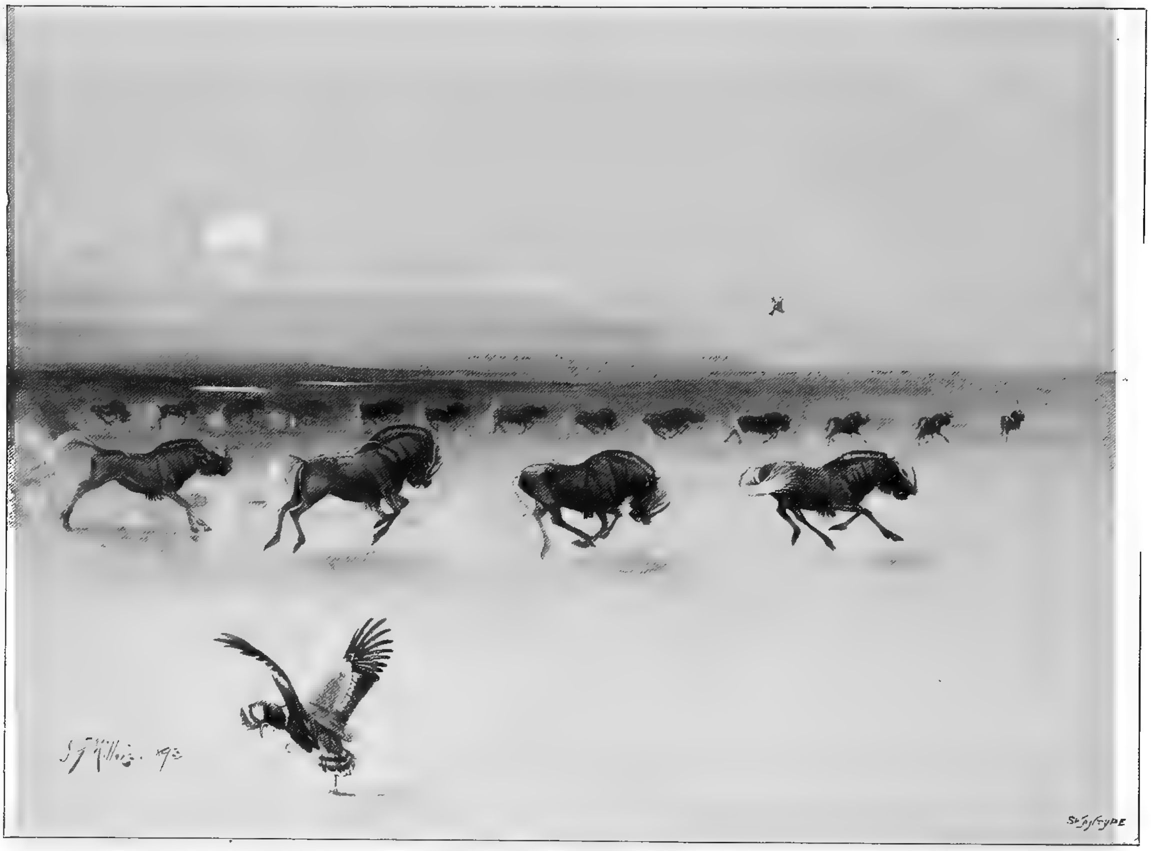
SKETCHES OF BLACK WILDEBEESTS FROM NATURE enthusiastic, threw cold water on my proposal, and when at last I got him started, he went about his business in such a half-hearted way that I was by no means sanguine as to the result. We commenced operations on the first herd, who had by this time a pretty intimate acquaintance with the cart and its contents, and having flattened myself out behind the largest ant-heap I could find, I lay and watched the tactics of my companion as he proceeded to head the troop about half a mile away. It was one of the prettiest and most exciting experiences with wild animals that has ever fallen to my lot. Without it I could never have known what a wild thrill of joy, not unmixed with fear that they will alter their course, the sight of a herd of these wild-looking creatures (half buffalo, half antelope) can cause as their black forms advance towards one, now cantering, now walking slowly and glancing distrustfully back at any object from which danger is suspected. Closer and closer they come, like a regiment of black horses advancing—800 yards, 600 yards, 400 yards! Will they ever stop cantering? Ah! now they slacken to a shambling walk, and wheel round with heads raised and tails arched, to watch Jan again, who, I am glad to see, has followed my instructions, and stopped quite still now that the beasts are



BLACK WILDEBEESTS MAKING THEIR SUDDEN TURN BEFORE STOPPING really approaching my ambush. That wait, though probably not more than a minute, seems endless as I keep my eyes fixed on the one old bull who stands out by himself at the tail of the string. Now do I bless that foremost cow as she swings round towards me, immediately followed by the rest of the troop at open order. Now is the moment of supreme excitement. I lie glued flat to the ground, not daring to move. On they come, and I see that it will be quite safe to drop the 200 yard flap and prepare for a close shot. However, eighty yards is quite near enough, as both rest and position are good, and the animals would stampede if they came a yard nearer. The rifle creeps up the side of the ant-heap, and I worm myself slowly into a comfortable position facing the master of the herd, just as a loud metallic snort from one of the leading cows proclaims the presence of danger. All one's physical forces are strained to the utmost to subdue the tumultuous beating of the heart and concentrate one's mind on the need of perfect steadiness at this critical moment, and it is with intense satisfaction that one finds that all is well immediately the trigger is pressed. The wildebeests are now flying in all directions, but the old bull is still there facing me, rapping with all four legs on the hard ground, and trying to withstand the shock he has just received. The wound is a mortal one ; but

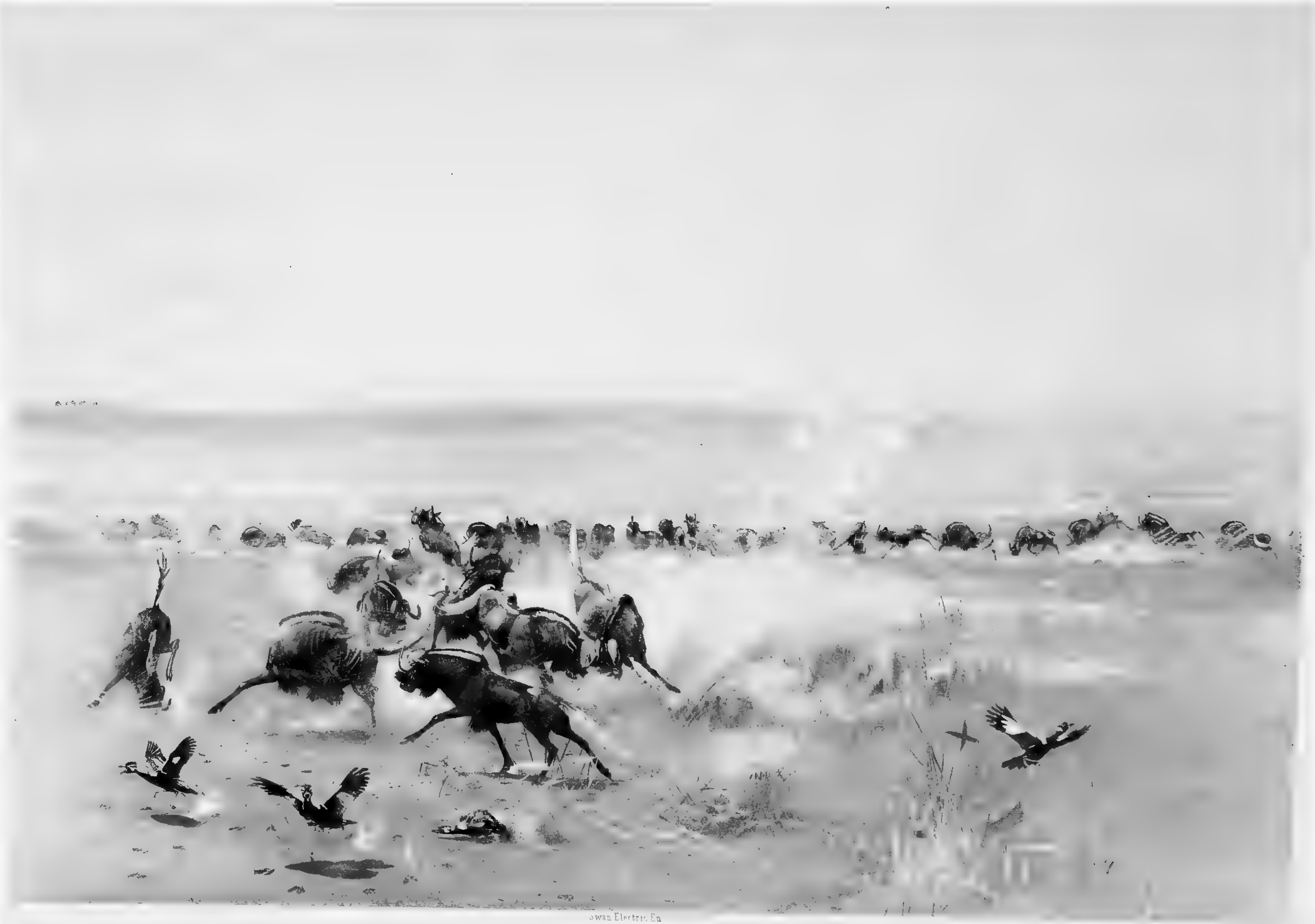

BLACK WILDEBEEST COWS EVICTING AN UNPOPULAR BULL FROM THE HERD

he gallops across my right front, and I give him another shot, of which he takes no notice. This manœuvre on his part is only a last effort; before he has covered fifty yards his pace settles into a walk, and, swaying from side to side, he falls to rise no more. Jan, who had by this time come up, said he thought the wildebeests must almost have trodden on me ("omper ha-trap") before he saw the smoke of my rifle—a notion that any of my readers will understand if, stalking in a deer forest, he has ever seen another stalker getting a shot at a stag whilst he himself lies and watches with his telescope from a distant hill. You lie and wonder how close the stalker really wants to get, and imagine he is firing off his rifle almost in the beast's face, whereas in reality the shot may have been taken at a distance of 100 yards.



CANTERING OUT TO FEED

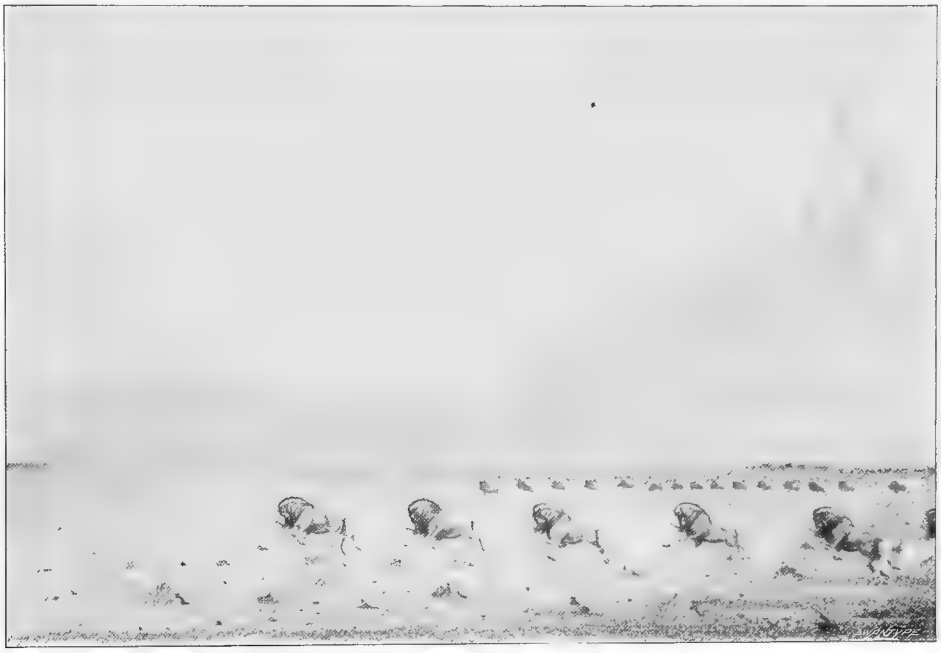
And now for a few remarks on the natural history of the black wildebeest, and its movements when at large. It will be seen from what I have already said how rapidly this highly interesting ruminant is becoming extinct, and how



Swan Electric En

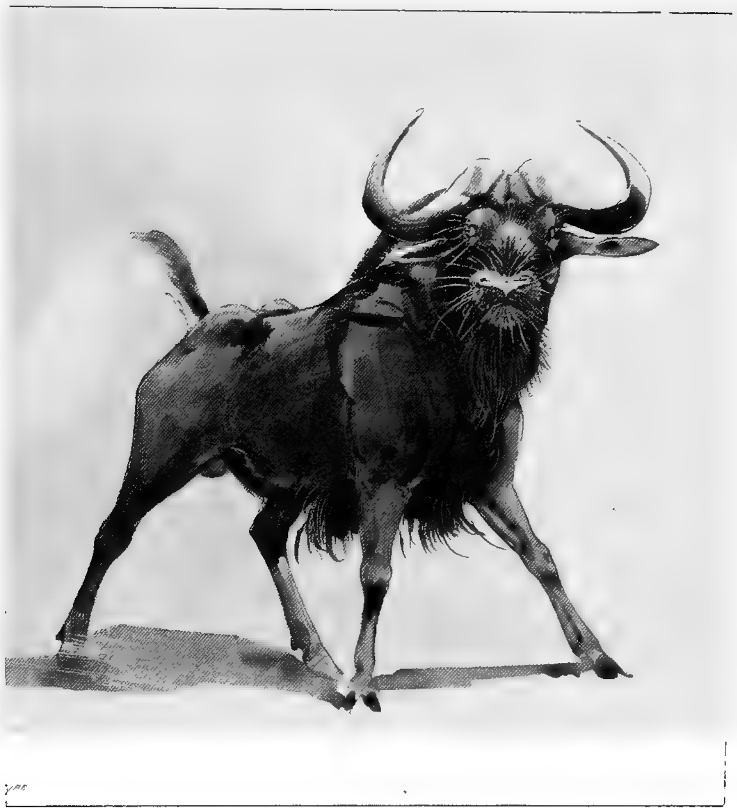
Herd of black Wildebeest commencing to run & separating into three curves

necessary to all lovers of nature a large South African game park is for the preservation of this and many other allied species. The white-tailed gnu (*Connochætes gnu*) was ever a strictly South African species, which never ranged much farther north than the Transvaal and Bechuanaland, though at one time there is no doubt it came as far south as the Karoo district of Cape Colony. Needless for me to speak of the vast number that greeted the eyes of the first Voor trekkers to the north ; for Gordon Cumming and Oswell have already given us fascinating accounts of these bygone days. I shall therefore confine myself to personal observations, presuming that the reader knows the creature by sight, and has some acquaintance with its ordinary habits. In the animal itself the first point of interest lies in its queerly-shaped horns and buffalo-like head, and thinking that a series of sketches showing the gradual development of these features may be interesting to some of my readers, I present them here. They were taken for the most part from the young male born in our own Zoological Gardens in June 1894, being made at varying periods, as the horns showed an inclination to change their form. The most rapid growth seemed to take place between the ages of six and nine months, and as soon as the horns commenced to curve from the base the old cow was irritated at the young one's attempts to suck, doubtless owing to the uncomfortable stabs she



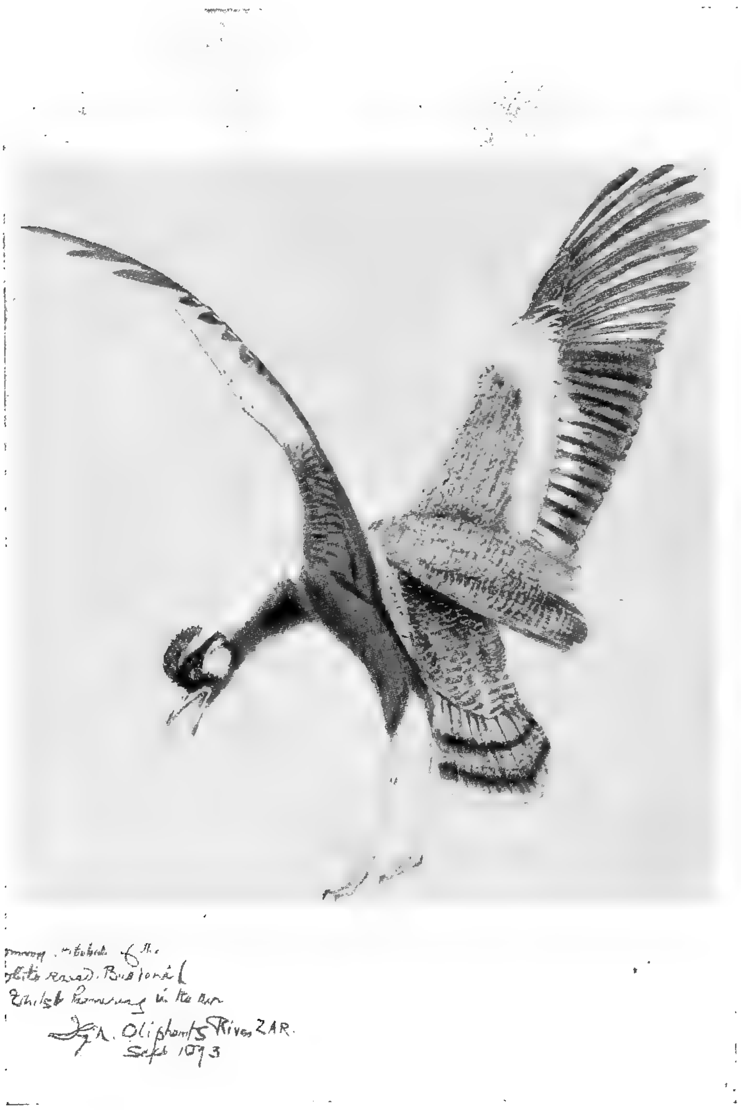
GALLOPING HOME AT SUNRISE

received in the stomach. I have seen her give him a severe blow, knocking him clean off his legs, to keep him away. I believe that the horns of the wildebeest obtain their full growth at two years of age, and that within another two years—owing to the terribly rough way in which they are used—they begin to crack and break away round the bases, until eventually the palms are worn quite away to the thinness of the horn beyond the curve, while the two bases stand up like round knobs on either side of the forehead, but do not in any way grow together. In the *Royal Natural History*, vol. ii. part x. it is said that " in very aged bulls the two horns approximate at their bases, so as to form a helmet-shaped mass completely covering the part of the skull as in the Cape buffalo." This is quite incorrect, as the bases of the horn never converge together and mass like those of the Cape buffalo, but keep their respective positions, with a space of about three inches between them covered with skin and hair, as in the bulls that have just reached maturity. Except the wearing away of the palms of the horns, the only difference between mature bulls and very old ones is in the colour of the hair covering the upper part of the forehead and between the horns to the back of the skull, which gradually changes with age from a rich warm brown to jet-black, and a somewhat similar alteration of colour over the whole coat of the animal, which every year becomes more pronounced. The troops to-day, where they exist, number as formerly from fifteen to fifty individuals, the smaller troops generally consisting of cows and immatures with one adult bull, whilst the larger may contain four or five adult bulls. The old bulls either herd together in parties of three or four, or wander about alone. Judging from the number of these latter (whose heads seem to be much worn) and the rapidity with which males reach maturity and then proceed to decline in head, I take it that the period during which bulls remain as masters of any particular herd is but short ; and there seems every reason to believe that if not previously ejected by some new aspirant to the position, the master is turned out by the cows themselves as soon as he shows the slightest sign of age. When not engaged in drawing I used to lie out every day and watch the herd near the farm, and twice I saw an old bull come up and attempt to join the troop, when two or three cows detached themselves from the rest, and with their heads down charged straight at him, forcing him to beat an ignominious retreat. Sometimes, too, when a hunted troop is galloping away in circles, an old bull that has been by himself will try to join the retreating string, when several cows will turn together and fight him off. Every attitude and movement of those wild, fierce-looking antelope is more or less peculiar to them. When feeding they frequently kneel—a position which few, if any, of the other ruminants ever assume after they have ceased to be calves. And probably from force of habit old bulls, when ploughing up the ground in excess of fury, will often drop suddenly on their knees—a circumstance which partly accounts for the condition of "Jack" at our Zoo. If some of my readers could but see him in one of his tantrums, they would not wonder that his knees were worn hard and smooth and his horns blunted, cracked, and chipped in two years of confinement. When the wildebeest bull is exceedingly angry he not only gets down on the ground and drives one horn into the earth, attempting to tear it up, but, as I have myself seen on several occasions, he will use his head like a plough, burying one of his horns in the ground and pushing himself forward by means of his hind legs alone. This does not do the ground much harm, but it has a bad wear-and-tear effect on the gentleman who is so foolish as to lose his temper. These exhibitions of violence are only some of numerous traits in the wildebeest character : the extraordinary attitudes and evolutions of a herd



A WOUNDED BLACK WILDEBEEST BULL

under excitement have been a subject for the pen of nearly every writer w
has visited South Africa. So queer, wonderful, and varied are they that I s
think there is plenty to say that is practically new, whilst the field for
artist's impressions of them is quite untouched. Perhaps some of my read



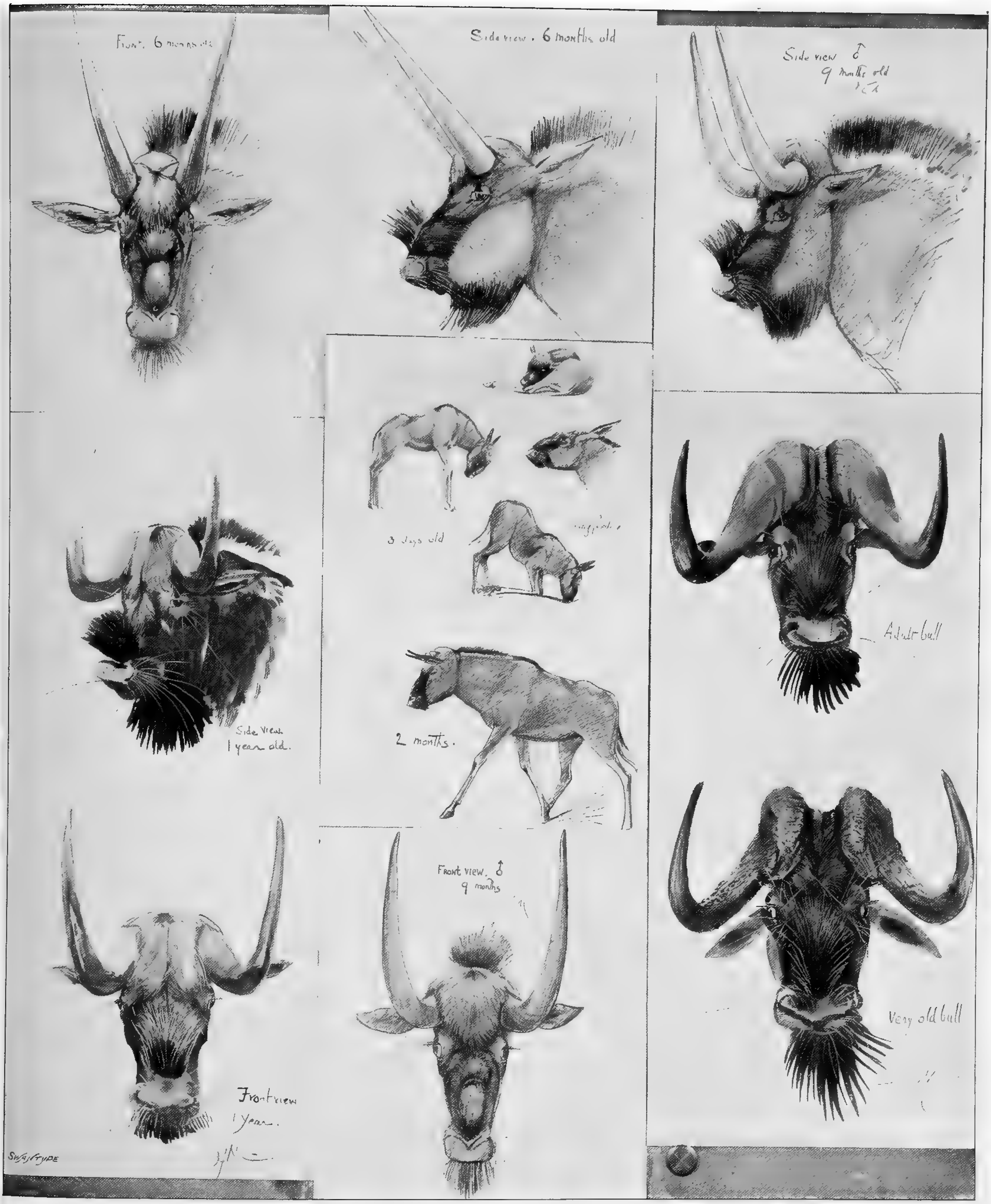
THE WHITE-QUILLED BLACK KHOORHAN IN ITS USUAL ATTITUDE OF HOVERING WHEN DISTURBED

may think I have caricatured and "Munchausened" the acrobatic feats a
tomfoolery of these clowns of the desert. I can only say to such doubters, "
and see for yourselves." As an absolute fact, it is almost impossible for
artist to exaggerate the extraordinary gambols and grotesque savagery of a h
as it commences to run. To convey an exact impression to the mind of

reader, perhaps I cannot do better than describe the first meeting with a big troop of say fifty of these wildebeests. Your approach will have been ignored until within 500 yards of them ; then the animals, if they are lying down, rise and shake themselves and gaze steadily in your direction. When they see that you are still approaching the whole troop generally commence walking uneasily to and fro, swishing their white tails from side to side with such violence that the whistling caused by this movement can be heard nearly a quarter of a mile away. Sometimes they will continue this operation for a considerable time, occasionally giving a savage shake to their heads, accompanied by a skittish buck. Then the whole herd, led generally, though not always, by an old cow, prepare to run, affording as a spectacle one of the most curious—I might even say, one of the grandest—sights in Nature. Not only are the attitudes of the animals themselves, as they alternately kick, buck, roll and fight, queer in the extreme, but the various formations which a large troop goes through on the Veldt are in themselves fascinating to the onlooker. Very strange and very interesting is it to witness the facility with which the leaders of the various strings into which a herd splits up, conform to each other's movements in spreading out over the Veldt, and again swinging together as the herd becomes reunited. As a rule a troop of twelve keeps in one string while performing their evolutions. A herd of twenty-five or thirty splits into two detachments, forming separate lines which diverge when starting to run, but always eventually reunite, however complicated their manœuvres ; whilst a herd numbering about fifty will separate into three, or even four, distinct curves, two moving to the right and two to the left ; but all, as a rule, swing into one line again before coming to a halt. Sometimes individuals mistake their positions, and are punished accordingly ; it is a common sight, as the herd stops and faces the hunter, to see a couple of bulls, or even cows, drop on their knees and fight furiously for a minute, displaying a fierceness and energy that might be disastrous to a less thick-skinned and wiry animal than the black wildebeest.

Most antelopes, when stopping in the middle of a gallop to survey an intruder, gradually slacken their pace to a walk, and fixing their gaze on him, come slowly to a halt with their faces to the foe. Not so the black wildebeest. When about to halt the troop may be seen slowly cantering along, till the leader, without stopping for a moment to have a look, suddenly turns round, retraces its steps, followed in single file by the whole herd ; and not until the very last one has formed up to the new front do they pull up. Black wildebeests never travel very far in their first runs after being alarmed—a herd may be followed and kept at a certain distance pretty nearly all day long—but then they are also such excellent judges of distance that, however you manœuvre, you can seldom get nearer than 500 yards, and even then they have a most provoking habit of moving off again just as you are about to press the trigger. The more they are harassed the poorer, as a rule, become one's chances; and though the hunter, bent on matching the speed of his horse against that of the game, may occasionally succeed in obtaining a fairly close running shot, he will soon find himself outmatched, for even the calves at a few days old can run with incredible swiftness. Their call, which may be described as a loud, bellowing snort with a curiously metallic ring in it, is unlike the cry of any other animal, being a sort of mixture between the alarm snort of most of the larger antelopes and the whistling bellow of the Burmese gayal. Both cows and bulls give vent to it, though the latter far the most frequently. In so doing the animal raises its head slightly, and then opening its mouth with a sudden jerk, out comes all it has to say. I have spent weeks in our Zoological Gardens sketching and watching the specimens there, but have never heard them make any other sound; though African natives say they have another mode of expressing themselves—a long-drawn cry like the Hottentot word "gnoo," from which the animal is said to derive its name. The rutting season takes place in March, and the young are born about June.

Black wildebeests will sometimes travel immense distances in a single night for the purpose of feeding on a bit of Veldt, where the young grass is better than that near their own lying ground. During my stay rain fell over part of the country some twenty miles from the farm and beyond the lands of Piet Terblans; and away went the game to feed there. Every evening about sunset I used to see two or three strings of them cantering slowly away to the north; and one morning, as we drove back to Kronstad, we passed through this tract of country, obtaining as the cart went along a grand view of all the game there was in the place, as they galloped homewards with the first rays of the morning sun playing on them. They knew quite well that they were on land where danger was to be apprehended, and were making off home as fast as their legs could carry them. The various paces of the white-tailed gnu are each and all graceful, free, and unlike the somewhat cramped and stiff action of their congeners. In most of their movements there is generally a free bending of all the limbs, except when trotting very fast, when (considering the size of the animal) the stride is immense, and the pace equal to that of most antelopes when galloping. At this pace the knee-joints are hardly bent at all, and the


Front. 6 months old
Side view. 6 months old
Side view ♂
9 months old
3 days old
2 months.
Side view
1 year old.
Adult bull
Very old bull
Front view ♂
9 months
Front view
1 Year.
Swaintype

GROWTH OF HORNS OF THE MALE BLACK WILDEBEEST

head is held straight out without arching the neck, as when galloping. The position of head and neck when cantering will be seen in my sketch on page 332. Until quite recently almost the easiest way to obtain these animals—the way, indeed, in which they were generally taken—was for the gunner to remain concealed near their drinking pool; then, if they were thirsty and could not quite make out the spot from whence the shots were coming, a number of them could often be killed at short range before the rest took definite alarm. Oom Piet told me that it was owing to this practice that the district had been nearly cleared.

One evening a few years ago, while working amongst his sheep, he heard numerous shots proceeding from the edge of one of the pans near the main road running through his territory, and out of curiosity he rode over next morning to see what the gunner had been shooting at. There he found the carcases of twenty-seven black wildebeests, from only one of which the skin and meat had been removed; and the sight so incensed him that he determined to preserve the wildebeests in future. At first he found this a somewhat difficult task; but by keeping a couple of black boys constantly on the look-out, and helped by his numerous sons, who occupied houses within an area of about thirty square miles and gladly acted as keepers, he managed to stop indiscriminate slaughter; and now he has the satisfaction of possessing practically the only wild white-tailed gnus in existence.

I cannot conclude these few notes without relating a little yarn told me one evening by my host as we smoked our pipes after supper, sitting on the bench which overlooked the broad wastes of this southern wilderness.

"One day," said Oom Piet, "in the times gone by I go out into the Veldt to shoot a wildebeest cow. Ah! Jan, those were days! for the blessbucks and springbucks were as the stones in the river, and the wildebeests as the ant-heaps in the Veldt. Oom Piet[1] rides his big black stallion, 'Klinboy' (little boy), and he *could* gallop! Almighty! he could gallop as fast as a blessbuck. Jan will see the rise beyond the pan. From there Oom Piet looked over the Veldt and saw that the land was moving with game. But what is this cloud of dust that Oom Piet sees, and is making the game to trek from side to side? A wildebeest cow and calf hotly pressed by three hunting dogs! One dog is close up and the two others take it easy behind. As they come near I see the dog close up, but the old cow is too quick, and she charges him, driving her horn into his side, and leaving him dead on the Veldt. Now Oom Piet thinks, will the other two dogs catch the wildebeest calf? So I climb up the horse and gallop gently after them. The calf is now tired and a second dog comes to seize it, but again the wildebeest cow strikes the dog and leaves him behind on the ground, very sick. But the calf cannot go far, and the third dog, who is more cunning, tries hard to bite the little one, and the cow keeps him off so badly that I see I must shoot the rascal. Now Oom Piet comes close, and still the dog does not run, so I shoot him dead, and there stands the old wildebeest cow, who snorts but does not fly from me. Now though I come to shoot a wildebeest, yet can I not kill a beast that has so bravely fought and will not run away; so Oom Piet takes off his hat and says, 'Good-day to you, old wildebeest cow; you are a good and strong old wildebeest.' And we dine off springbuck that night at the farm."

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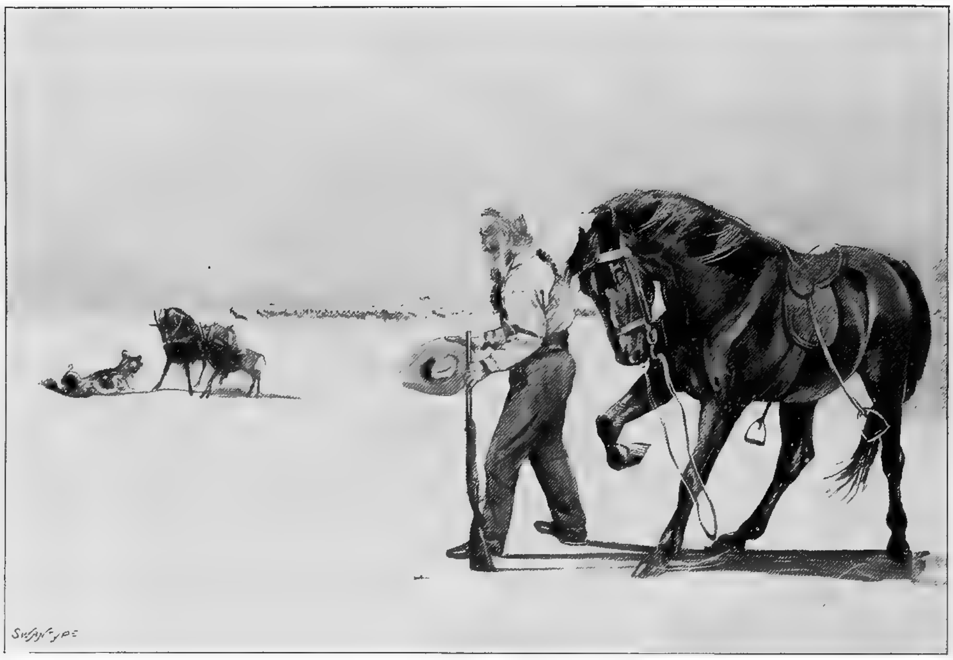
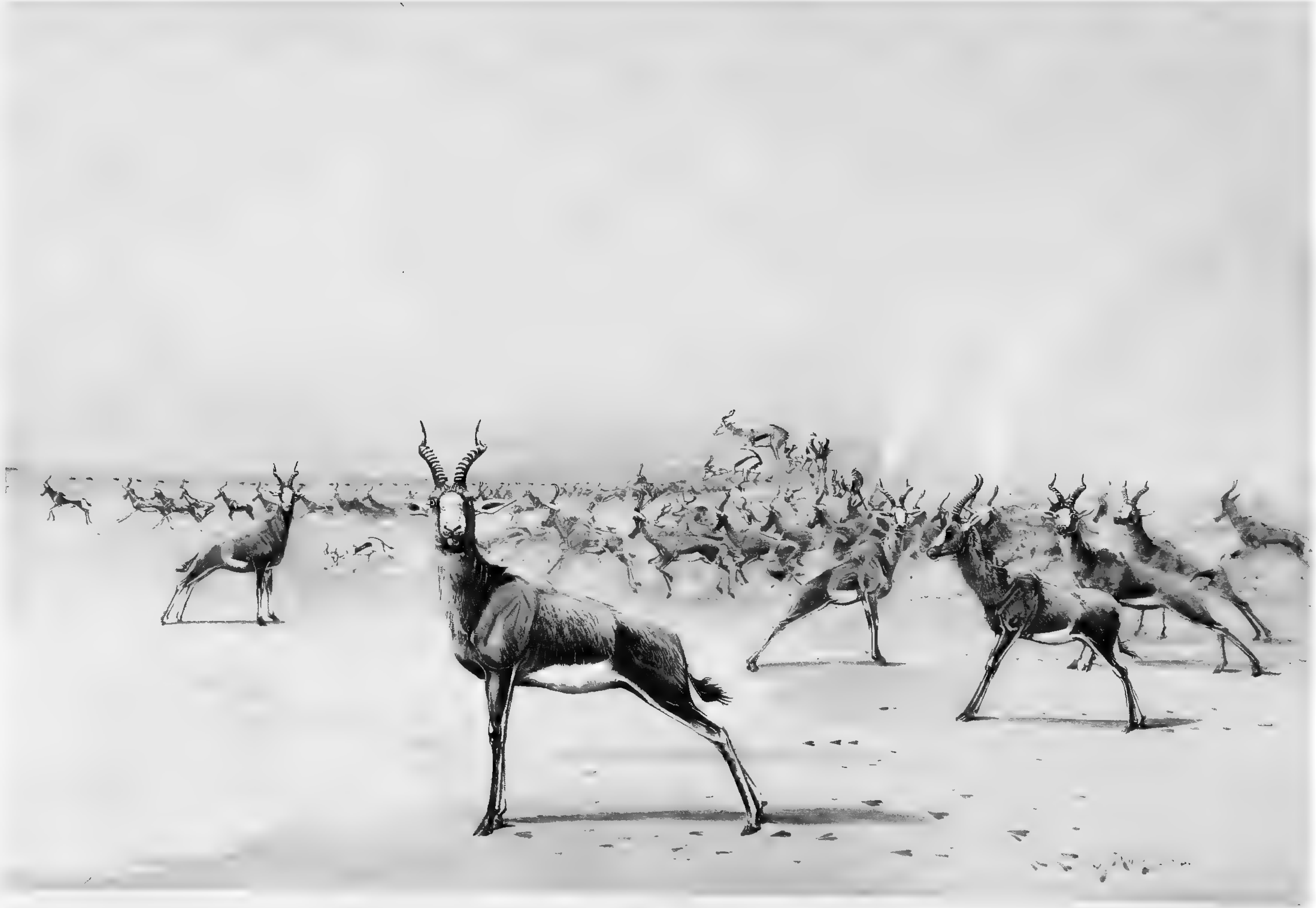
[1] A Dutchman will frequently refer to himself by name, or to his listeners by the name by which they are commonly known.



OOM PIET'S YARN

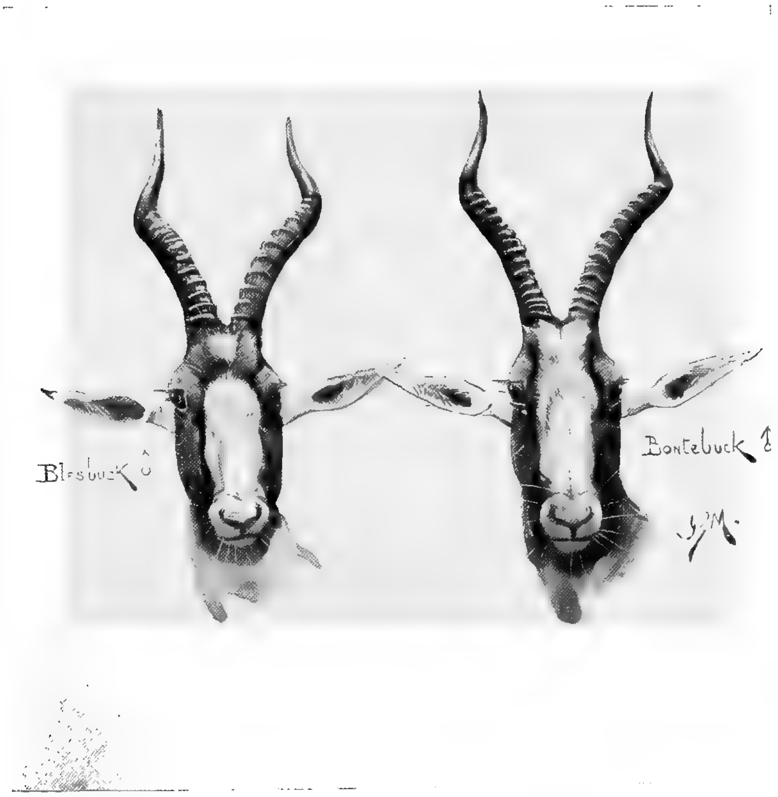
This was the simple story of Oom Piet; and, hard, matter-of-fact old fellow as he was, I doubt if any Englishman could have shown a greater sense of sportsmanlike consideration.

After the first few days were passed I was pleased to find that those mists of suspicion and dislike with which every Englishman is regarded by the Boers were gradually wearing away, and as each evening closed, my host and his good



Blesbucks about to run

"Vroo" (wife) became more and more loquacious, till by the end of a week I found the man whom I had heard everywhere stigmatised as a grasping ogre, an honest old farmer, who was actually asking me to prolong my visit, and—marvel of marvels—without paying for my board! Only once, I think, did the old chap show any sign of anger, and that was over the sketch I made of him at his own request. Just as I had finished it, his good "Vroo" (wife), who scaled about thirty stone, came up behind, and then stood holding her sides and shaking with laughter,—a circumstance which apparently led my host to fancy I was caricaturing him. He scowled furiously at my pictorial effort, till the old lady came to my relief, and assured him it was a true portrait of himself; but even this did not altogether satisfy him. He remarked sadly, "Well, I never knew I was such an ugly old devil before."



HEAD OF BLESSBUCK AND BONTEBUCK RAMS, SHOWING DIFFERENCE OF FACE MARKINGS

Before leaving Jan and I had two more very pleasant days on the Veldt, getting another black wildebeest bull and a blessbuck ram by driving in much the same manner as before; but there was nothing in our adventures to call for any special remark. The blessbuck formerly had a more extended range t the black wildebeest, although, like it, occupying the open plains, and always found in close association with that animal and the springbuck. V herds formerly existed throughout the Orange Free State, Southern Transv and Southern Bechuanaland, but now their numbers are confined to such tro as are preserved by the Boers north and south of the Vaal River. This bu with the bontebuck (which stands about 3 feet 4 inches), is commo included in the family of gazelles, but in general appearance and formation i more closely allied to the hartebeests. Like other gregarious animals, t are extremely shy, especially when the grass is short ; so they are by no me easy to shoot. When alarmed, and a shot or two has been fired at them, if animals have been feeding and are much scattered, they will instantly gat into small bunches and then join together, forming one large troop. From small experience, once this big troop is formed, the animals are infinitely sh than springbuck, and having lowered their heads and commenced to run wind, they travel much greater distances and offer far fewer chances to hunter than any of the other bucks of the plains. As stated in Chapter II. differ from other writers in considering the springbuck a fleeter antelope t the blessbuck, since in former days the hunting dogs could not run down latter animal, whereas the springbuck was a frequent victim. And I may that there are greyhounds to-day which can kill springbuck in a fair cour but none have as yet proved sufficiently swift to catch the larger animal. blessbuck's pace is a rolling, somewhat heavy canter, resembling the moveme of the hartebeests, and when running up-wind the animal frequently moves does the springbuck, with its head close to the ground like a hound on sce but if pressed it can upon occasion show great speed and energy. A typi attitude of this buck and the springbuck when about to run is shown in full-page electrogravure.

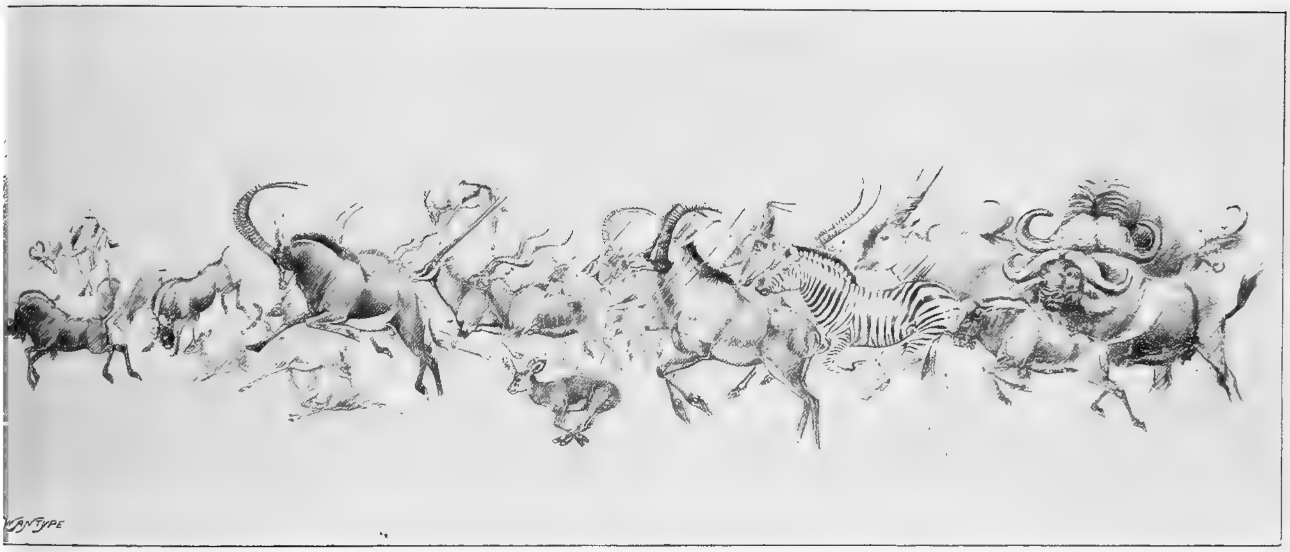
Apropos of these illustrations, "Jan," said Oom Piet to me one day, "w do you make of all those prints ?" I explained to the best of my ability manner in which reproductions were made and a book completed.

"And how much will you have to pay for a book like that you speak of

"Oh !" said I, "perhaps two or three pounds."

"Almighty ! Are they all d—d fools in England ? Why, I could bu good cow for that here." And with this remark the old man toddled off look after his lambs, leaving the prospective author to lament the loss subscriber and full of painful reflections.

Having got so far, dear reader, perhaps you begin to wonder whether Oom Piet was not right after all, and wish you had sunk your dollars in a cow rather than in this book, for I have little more to relate than what you have already read, and must say farewell to Africa, with its sunshine, its dust, its hardships, and its many attractions—attractions now unhappily on the wane, for every day that passes brings with it a growing throng of fortune-seekers and adventurers, who, obliterating the landmarks of the past, gradually drive the children of Nature farther and farther afield, and will probably continue to do so till the whole country is bereft of the romance and the glories of days gone by.



Howe'er it be, it seems to me
It's not important to be new.
New Art would better Nature's best,
But Nature knows a thing or two.
Punch.

THE END

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